

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 428

EA 009 585

AUTHOR Jones, J. William
TITLE Budget/Finance Campaigns: You Can't Afford to Lose.
INSTITUTION National School Public Relations Association, Arlington, Va.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 97p.
AVAILABLE FROM National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (Stock No. 411-13335, \$7.95; All orders under \$8 must be accompanied by payment; All orders over \$8 must be accompanied by payment unless submitted on an authorized purchase order)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; *Bond Issues; Budgets; Citizen Participation; Communication (Thought Transfer); Elections; Elementary Secondary Education; *Guidelines; Local Issues; *Organizational Communication; Political Issues; Program Descriptions; Program Planning; Publicize; *Public Relations; *School Budget Elections; School Community Relationship; Surveys; Voting

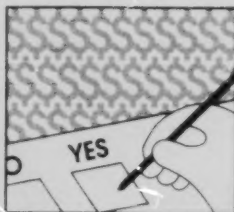
ABSTRACT

This book is about successful bond issues and levy campaigns. While no one campaign blueprint works everywhere, there are certain definite components to almost every successful school finance election. These components are the product of a carefully planned political process. Successful campaigns are based on some givens that must be in evidence before the campaign begins--year-round communication, a reasonable issue with an understandable budget, citizen involvement that builds credibility, an individualized campaign that carefully considers its first announcement, leadership and unity, and a positive attitude. Lists of reasons why issues pass and fail are presented along with descriptions of successful programs and guidelines for building budget credibility, organizing a campaign, and surveying the community. (Author/IBT)

* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICRO-
FICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ASPR A
THE ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERAT-
ING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NA-
TIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE
THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMIS-
SION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

Budget/Finance CAMPAIGNS:

YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE

A Publication of the
National School Public Relations Association

ED140428

EA 009 585

Copyright 1977
National School Public Relations Association
1801 N. Moore Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 77-80643

Single copy, \$7.95.

Stock No. 411-13335. All orders under \$8 must be accompanied by payment. All orders over \$8 must be accompanied by payment unless submitted on an authorized purchase order from a school district, organization or institution. Billed orders will include shipping and handling charges. Address communications and make checks payable to National School Public Relations Association, 1801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Table of Contents

Overview	5
Chapter 1. First, A Few "Givens"	8
Chapter 2. Why Issues Pass	13
Chapter 3. Why Issues Fail	18
Chapter 4. Building Budget Credibility	26
Chapter 5. Taking the Community's Pulse	38
Chapter 6. The First Announcement	43
Chapter 7. Organizing the Campaign	49
Chapter 8. How They Did It	73
Conclusion	94

Acknowledgement

Budget/Finance Campaigns: You Can't Afford To Lose is one of a series of communications handbooks published by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). The handbooks are designed to provide school administrators and communications specialists with practical help and ideas for solving current problems in education. Previous handbooks have dealt with releasing test scores and communicating during strikes/negotiations. The emphasis in all the handbooks is on the development of communication strategies which will build community support and understanding for the schools, their programs and policies.

Budget/Finance Campaigns: You Can't Afford To Lose was written by J. William Jones, director of informational services for the School District of Philadelphia. It was developed by and edited by Cynthia Menand and Virginia M. Ross of the NSPRA staff. Editorial director was John H. Wherry. Special editorial, production and research assistance was provided by Lyn Broad, Janet Eaffy, Anne C. Lewis and Deborah Lueckese.

The National School Public Relations Association is indebted to all the experts in school finance campaigns across the country who contributed materials and ideas for this report.

Overview

Once upon a time—it seems like 1,000 years ago—all a public school system had to do to get money was to ask. Those were also the days when everybody accepted the teacher's omniscience and looked upon a principal as the next thing to God.

There is no need to point out that times have changed. Educators are no longer deities. They must now prove their effectiveness. And that once easy money is now held back unless school systems can show what they intend to do with it—and virtually guarantee results.

The words are those of Donald Hymes, director of publications for the Montgomery County (Md.) Schools, writing in a recent issue of the *Journal of Educational Communication*. But the words could be from almost anyone connected with education today. For they reflect the frustration of school administrators, teachers, members of boards of education, and many, many others, as the escalating costs of today's education collide head-on with an angry electorate, fed up with the nation's economy in particular and government in general at the national, state and local levels.

No, it wasn't 1,000 years ago. It was more like 20. But in those 20 years, a financial revolution has descended on the classrooms of America, perhaps with more intensity than any other revolution to visit public education since its conception in the early 1800s.

The revolution has meant closed schools, laid-off teachers, drastic cutbacks in educational services, and defeat after defeat of bond issues and tax levies intended to stem the flow of the fiscal tide that continues to erode public education from coast to coast.

'Yes' Vote Declines

An analysis by Community Support Service of the School Research and Service Corporation, Anaheim, Calif., covering 74 school finance issues on the March 2, 1976, primary ballot in California, showed that only 19 passed, and of the 19, only seven involved tax increases. And not one single finance issue passed in any California school system with more than 3,000 voters.

In Illinois, results of school bond and tax rate referenda show that the percentage of bond issues passing dropped from 75% in 1969-70 to 47% in 1974-75, while the percentage of tax levies passing dropped from 51% in 1969-70 to 37% in 1974-75.

Nationally, in 1976, 878 bond issues for \$3.43 billion in school construction were submitted to voters in school districts across the country, and only 52.6% of them—462, for \$1.44 billion—were approved. Worse yet, the defeats, although less than 50%, involved 58% of the money sought. Putting it another way, in 1976 angry voters across America said "no" to \$2 billion needed for school construction.

And statistics for tax levies, although not officially available on a national level, undoubtedly were far worse.

From the Taxpayer's Pocket

Supt. Michael P. Marcuse, pleading for additional subsidies for the deficit-ridden Philadelphia schools before a joint hearing of the Pennsylvania Senate and House education committees, put it this way:

When steelworkers get a big raise, the solution for auto companies is simple. They raise the price of cars. When clothing workers get similar raises, the cost of clothing climbs out of sight. And when the Teamsters get a similar raise, the markets pay the freight, and quickly pass it along to the customer.

Yet, when teachers and principals and custodians and aides get salary increases, there is only one place the money can come from, and that's right from the taxpayer's pocket.

So the taxpayer, already stung at the auto agency and the clothing store and the supermarket and the insurance company, finally has a ready-made target on which to vent his frustration. It's education; a sitting duck relying on taxes for its very existence and dealing with a taxpayer who's had it up to here with the economy.

But, There Are Success Stories

Yet, amid the gloom and doom that all too often pervade the process of financing public education today, there are stories of success. There are bond issues and tax levies passing, some of them by comfortable margins. There are still many school systems in this country that have never had to taste the bitterness of rejection by their electorate. In short, successful bond issue and levy campaigns continue to be mounted; they continue to defy the national trend.

These kinds of campaigns are what this book is all about.

For while no one campaign blueprint works everywhere, there are certain definite components to almost every successful school finance election, be it in a big city, in a small town or in any of the thousands of school districts in between.

These components don't fall together by chance. They are the products of a carefully planned political process, the results of the nitty gritty of campaign politics, of asking yourself every conceivable question and coming up with answers to match, of understanding the dynamics of successful electioneering and applying them throughout the school district through the sweat and toil of a dedicated, volunteer campaign team.

The days are gone, in most school districts throughout this country, when a few speeches by the superintendent, a news release or two, an editorial in the local paper and a general, relatively innocuous mailing to local residents would result in a "yes" vote.

It worked once.

Now, it takes an all-out effort by a great many educators, parents, civic groups and interested citizens, welded into a highly functional campaign organization, to be successful at the polls with a school finance election.

And *that* is one of the few certainties in the kaleidoscopic world of education finance as public education heads uncertainly toward the 21st Century, caught between the rock of inflation and the hard place of taxpayer revolt.

Chapter 1.

First, A Few 'Givens'

Even the most effective school finance campaign team is all but sunk—no matter its expertise, its dedication and its tireless efforts on behalf of a “yes” vote—if certain elements, certain “givens,” are not already in evidence well before the campaign begins.

Year-Round Communication—A Must

And the first and foremost given is that **“Love-Me-Suddenly” campaigns simply don’t work.**

An effective, year-round communication program with the community, far in advance of any election campaign, is essential.

Voters are forming and modifying their attitudes about a school district every day, every school year, whether an election is scheduled or not. Any election campaign is nothing more than a specialized, highly concentrated part of a school district’s ongoing, year-round communication program with its community.

And if that supposedly on-going communication campaign consists merely of a story in the local newspaper now and then, forget it. The media, to be sure, generally are unsurpassed for providing quick, on-the-spot information. But they are relatively ineffective in forming long-range, positive attitudes about education.

These kinds of attitudes are formed primarily through a concerted effort by the school district, its school board and its staff, on an everyday basis, to make lasting, favorable, personal contact with its community.

It’s as given as any given could be: If the electorate is generally ignored by a school district most of the year, then suddenly courted just before the November election or the spring primary when a critical school finance question hangs in the balance, the answer most probably will be a resounding “no.”

And that year-round communication program with the community can't be a one-sided love affair, either. Communication is a two-way process.

School districts must seek and heed input from the community at the same time they ask the community to accept and to understand their own communications.

As Donald R. Bagin, professor of communications at Glassboro (N.J.) State College, says: "Year-round feedback is a vital tool for administrators so they can make decisions to agree with the community's thinking, or so they know how much work will be needed to gain acceptance of educational ideas that are inconsistent with the community's views."

And today what educational idea could be more inconsistent with the community's views than more taxes to finance public schools?

In short, school finance campaigns are won and lost on a 12-month basis, and no amount of last-minute, high-powered public relations courtship will change the electorate's coolness toward a school district that has failed to communicate with its community.

Reasonable and Understandable

A second given is that **the issue to be voted on must be reasonable**, as economical as humanly possible, and perhaps most important of all, salable.

Odie Dickens, director of communications for the school district of Clayton, Mo., puts it this way: "A reasonable, salable proposition is essential! Give the voters credit for common sense and respect their ability to pay."

Good, simple common sense to be sure; but, unfortunately, the fields of school finance election defeats are littered with propositions that fell simply because school officials tried to get just one more middle school or just an extra mill or two out of a reluctant electorate.

Another given is an **understandable budget**. Nothing irks taxpayers—and voters—more than a waterfall of financial figures and formulas couched in fiscal jargon that only an accountant can understand.

The budget you are asking voters to approve, or the community to accept, must be reduced to people terms, to common, everyday language easily understood by the man in the street. For that man in the street, rather than the banker or the statistician or the accountant, will soon be the man in the voting booth, or the irate taxpayer at a budget hearing, who will determine whether your budget sinks or swims.

The budget simply must be translated into students and teachers and books and instruction, rather than reflect just page upon page of numbers, positions, line items and budget classifications. To the irate taxpayer, who simply may not *want* to understand in the first place, nothing makes that decision easier than an unintelligible budget document.

Citizen Involvement and Credibility

Still another given, and one that goes hand-in-hand with a year-round, two-way communication program, is **citizen involvement** in both the budget building process and the election campaign.

Without both, the budget or an election campaign is in serious trouble.

And the reason is **credibility**. If citizens are not involved from the ground up in the building of a budget, they naturally become skeptical. "What are you hiding?" "Where's the fat?" "How about the frills?"

With community leaders involved in the budget building process, however, they can explain the budget to their peers, give it credibility, defend it, and promote it in an election campaign.

Community Support Service (CSS) of California's School Research and Service Corp. surveyed eight Ohio school districts that passed bond issues in November 1974 (out of 58 who tried) and came to the conclusion that "credibility surfaces as the key ingredient." Said CSS:

Today's voter defines his vote in much the same way as the dictionary defines 'credible'—'worthy of belief, entitled to confidence, trustworthy, reliable.' If he feels that a tax issue is worthy—if he is confident that his tax dollar will be used to fulfill a valid need—he'll more than likely vote for it.

It is, thus, significant that credibility is the one thread that is woven through all eight Ohio school bond victories. In five of the districts, the bond issue's credibility was wrapped in the framework of a tradition in the district for supporting its schools.

In two other districts, the issue's credibility sprang from the fact that the 'community' had spent at least two years studying the 'need' and that by election day it was a foregone conclusion that the bond issue was worthy of passage.

In one district, a change in administration seemed to generate a feeling of trust and confidence, thus providing the bond issue with the credibility it needed.

Just as voters today are demanding greater credibility from their public officials, as well as their candidates for public office, these same voters are demanding greater credibility in the tax proposals they're asked to support.

In short, credibility is a priceless commodity. Build it, protect it, treasure it.

Individualize; Plan the First Announcement

Two more givens: **Every campaign must be tailor-made for its individual community, and your first announcement is critical.**

A campaign that was a smashing success in one community may fall flat next door. Every community has its own heartbeat, its own pulse; its own questions and its own concerns; its own likes and its own dislikes. Learn them, respect them, cultivate them, cater to them.

A campaign for an open, innovative, free-wheeling school may be just what one community desires, and something just short of treason a township, a county or a state away.

Know your community or your campaign is in trouble from the very beginning.

And be aware that a recent study of 1,000 bond elections in Iowa showed that at least 75% of the voters made up their minds the very first time they heard of the issue.

So your first announcement must be well-planned, well-put-together and well-publicized.

Also, the simpler the issue, the more its chance of passage.

According to the newsletter, "Winning Tax Campaigns":

The larger the number of issues placed before the voters at one time, the greater the chance that some will be rejected. The more options given the voter, the more often he or she tends to vote NO.

There is a very sound reason why voters act this way. The larger the number of ballot issues, the less likely the voter will feel adequately informed on each one. When voters are in doubt, they vote NO.

The lesson to learn here is: Stay single when it comes to being on the ballot.

Leadership and Unity

Two more critical givens are **leadership** and **unity**. Says CSS in its study of California's recent finance elections:

The leadership in a school district is a subtlety that CSS has recognized in this election study as critical to success through lengthy discussion with peripheral observers of campaigns throughout the state. Two particular kinds of leadership were noted: strong campaign leadership, either through an assertive, respected citizens' committee chairperson or through an outside agency or consultant. The second kind of leadership related to the superintendent and his ability to mobilize staff and volunteer workers quickly and effectively, and to maintain strong though indirect, control over the campaign.

And with that leadership must go an informed, supportive, unified, committed school board.

Few school boards divided among themselves on a school finance issue can expect community support. A finance election victory must be a team effort of the total school family, from the custodians and bus drivers to the superintendent and the board.

"Think Win!"

The community can sense a defeatist attitude on the part of the school district, and the spark, the drive, the spirit necessary to carry out a successful campaign will never be realized.

If you don't honestly and objectively believe you can win, don't get on the ballot in the first place.

Why Issues Pass

Two people who have spent much of the past 10 years wrestling with school finance campaigns are Ned S. Hubbell, a former school information specialist who is now president of a Port Huron, Mich., education public relations consulting firm, and William J. Banach, a school communications consultant and director of communications coordinator for the Macomb Intermediate School District, Mt. Clemens, Mich.

Hubbell, a school community attitude expert, cites the following reasons why school finance elections pass:

- ✓ The campaign was citizen-led and involved a massive team effort—parents, nonparents, all staff, students, board members and administrators.
- ✓ It was well planned and timetabled with ample time for analysis and planning.
- ✓ It was localized—addressing local concerns.
- ✓ It was chiefly a neighborhood campaign with lots of face-to-face communications.
- ✓ The efforts to convince people of the needs and the drive to persuade people to vote for the issue were kept separate.
- ✓ The campaign was child-oriented—needs were humanized; dollar-talk was minimized.
- ✓ Persuasion efforts were peaked and poured on in last three weeks.
- ✓ It was tailored to use voters' information sources.

- ✓ All information efforts were simplified and didn't allow complex legal, financial, educational jargon.

Hubbell contends that a school district's principal concern should be: "Will this make sense to the 'average' voter?" His advice: "Put yourself in the other guy's shoes and let him know what he wants to know."

Critical Characteristics

Banach, surveying the wreckage of Michigan's June 1976 school finance elections, found certain characteristics in most successful campaigns.

"The overwhelming difference between winning and losing," he reports, "was diligence—carefully developed strategies, commitment to a plan and dogged attention to detail."

His specific reflections:

- The winners spent as much time planning their campaigns as they did implementing them. Most spent more time planning than communicating.
- The winners studied previous elections in their districts before planning the June campaign.
- The winners relied on face-to-face communication (block visitations and coffees) to build support for their ballot issues and reinforce the positive attitudes held by ye voters.
- The winners augmented their face-to-face communications with printed material. Rarely did printed material carry the full communication load.
- The winners took steps to identify target audiences and isolate their informational needs.
- Campaign literature in winning districts centered on children and educational programs rather than school finances.
- The boards of education in winning school districts were generally unanimous in their vote to place the financial issue on the ballot.

- The winners were more committed to year-round financial communication than the losers.
- The winners typically placed responsibility for the campaign in the hands of one person.
- One form or another of citizen involvement characterized the campaigns of winners.
- The winners began their campaigns by informing all voters of the ballot issue and its implications for the educational program.
- The winners made special efforts to communicate with school supporters.
- Most winning campaigns were organized by elementary attendance areas, and the elementary principals had key communication responsibilities.
- Most winners had a history of working with the news media on a year-round basis. No winner relied solely on the media for campaign communication.
- The winners didn't threaten voters with cuts in program, but they did clearly explain what would happen in the event of financial defeat. Most often the winners provided this information as "locally" as possible; i.e., general explanations of what defeat would mean were provided by central office; more specific information was provided in a child-centered way by the building principals.
- Citizens in winning school districts seemed to know well ahead of the election that funds were needed. The announcement of the election wasn't a surprise.
- Staff communication was considered a priority in winning districts. Staff members were first to know the need for the election and the ingredients of the campaign. Simply put, winners considered staff involvement an essential campaign consideration.
- Winning districts carefully timed their communications and campaign activities. Care was taken to get the right information to the right place at the right time.

- Winning districts followed the rule of "into/out-to." They stressed the year-round importance of getting citizens into the schools for various programs and activities . . . and they made sure they went out to the public before and during the financial campaign.
- Winners had provisions for obtaining grassroots feedback, and they used the information they obtained to improve their communications.
- Winners invited—sought out—citizen questions about the financial issue. And they provided believable answers to questions asked.
- Winners telephoned school supporters the evening before or the day of the election with a reminder to vote.

Eight Critical Steps

Thus, Banach says, there are eight sequential steps to follow in putting together a finance campaign, regardless of the issue on the ballot. They are:

1. **Analysis**—is probably the most important step in any campaign. It means tuning in to the community to find out what people know and need to know about the ballot issue. It means using informal listening techniques, citizen committees and opinion research. Analysis is the first thing you do in a campaign . . . and it's the most important.
2. **Determine needs**—after you analyze the community. Use the knowledge of your community that analysis provides to develop a ballot issue that is salable.
3. **Strategy**—is also based on analysis. In planning campaigns, the fundamental premise is that some people are more supportive than others. These people have to be identified, and their support for schools reinforced. Efforts must also be planned to reach the undecided voter. "No" voters should be ignored during the campaign proper. "No" voters should be accommodated during the year-round school communication program.

4. **Organize**—to implement the strategy. Put the campaign in the hands of one person, and give him/her the responsibility and authority needed. Put school people in charge of operating committees, and let them recruit as many volunteers as necessary to complete the committees' tasks. (But when it's accountability time, it's the school people you'll be looking toward.) Make sure the campaign is organized to effectively deliver information and respond to inquiries at the neighborhood level. Chances of success are directly proportional to the amount of personal contact organized in the neighborhoods.
5. **Plan**—every detail . . . twice. Establish a calendar that tells who is responsible for what when. And hold people to it. Revised—and more detailed—calendars should be issued at least monthly during the campaign . . . and updated as needed by a vehicle for communicating late-breaking campaign news.
6. **Finance**—the plan. It's the order of things that's important. Don't say: "We have \$100, what kind of campaign can we run?" Determine what needs doing and have the finance committee raise the money necessary to do it.
7. **Communicate**—in both shotgun and rifle style. Look at the campaign in four stages: education, information, response/reinforcement and activation. These stages imply a long timetable beginning with mass communication (shotgun) techniques and winding into personal (rifle) approaches during stages three and four. The final stage is usually 7-10 days in length and is devoted almost entirely to personal contracts of "yes" voters.
8. **Evaluate**—to see what went right . . . and what went wrong. Surveys, talks with volunteers and other types of critiques can make even the best campaign better the next time. And evaluation brings the process full cycle to analysis. That means when you look back on the campaign just finished you are already starting the next one.

Chapter 3.

Why Issues Fail

Just as there are certain fundamental reasons why school finance issues pass, there are fundamental reasons why they fail. According to Hubbell, school districts which lost at the polls:

- ✓ Started too late and put out too much, too soon, too fast.
- ✓ Attempted to "sneak the issue through" and ran a campaign that was too "low key."
- ✓ Had too much talk about money, with everything too dollar-oriented.
- ✓ Used explanations that were too complex.
- ✓ Did not use citizen leadership but depended too much on their boards of education and staff members to handle the election information efforts.
- ✓ Had campaigns that just publicized the campaign—with nothing on the needs.
- ✓ Mixed conviction efforts with persuasive appeals.
- ✓ Used the wrong information channels—forgot to use those the "average voter" relies on.
- ✓ Aimed information on district's needs to total district rather than at each area of the district.

The 'Dirty Dozen'

Says Banach: "School financial issues fail because educators don't understand campaign dynamics. That's a basic fact those of us in education find difficult to accept. Moreover, we tend to bungle key tasks. We compound our oversights by neglecting to ask "Why?" when the totals are posted. This neglect—this stubborn refusal to evaluate results—is a major cause of most financial defeats.

According to Banach there are 12 potential pitfalls that planners of school district finance campaigns can avoid if they take the time to evaluate past efforts which have failed. To combat the "dirty dozen," he has developed "rules" which if heeded should increase a school system's chances of success at the polls:

RULE ONE: Avoid the split board at all costs. It is the best reason John Q. Public' can have to vote against the issue.

Voting four-to-three on a financial issue is the kiss of death. After all, if the board can't make up its minds, how can it expect the public to? Even one member of the board of education voting against an issue raises numerous credibility questions:

RULE TWO: Disregard for analysis is a surefire way to start your campaign with a fizzle.

One wouldn't dive into a swimming pool without pausing to see if it contained water. A common sense parallel should apply before launching a financial campaign.

A good starting point is a thorough assessment of previous elections. The opinion poll is an obvious technique, one which should be combined with other year-round analysis (listening) activities to get a clear picture of what the community wants and what the people are likely to support.

RULE THREE: Ignore "no" voters. Know in advance how many "yes" voters are needed and go after them.

Identify those who support your efforts, make sure they understand the issue, and get them to the polls.

Study after study shows the "no" voters are hard to convince. The fundamental fact is that some people (publics) are more supportive than

others, and it's more productive and easier to find 10 "yes" voters than to turn one "no" voter around. Elections are won vote by vote, and where there are some votes there are more votes.

RULE FOUR: Lack of planning is the root cause of floundering campaigns. Developing timelines and detailing responsibilities are prerequisites for success.

Campaigns without plans are characterized by "too little, too late." This could be called a planning gap—the difference between where one wants to go and where one is likely to go if intentions aren't detailed. Planners take the knowledge gained from analysis and strategy sessions and translate it into an action sequence. This sequence of activity then has to be communicated via a master calendar to everyone involved in the campaign.

RULE FIVE: Citizens should be involved.

School financial issues are won by meaningfully involved citizens. Why? They are more credible in the neighborhoods than educators and can more effectively create that "don't be the last kid on the block" feeling throughout the community.

But citizens need direction, and that's why they shouldn't control campaigns.

Campaigns should be citizen-led and administratively controlled. There are three basic reasons: First, citizens know even less than educators about campaigning. Second, a good campaign requires full-time effort. Most citizens simply cannot devote the man-hours necessary. Third, administrators can be held accountable for their activities. The campaign coordinator can put the "heat" on an administrator to work harder or smarter . . . or both. Unfortunately, this is something most citizen volunteers won't tolerate.

RULE SIX: It is difficult to be successful unless you commit continuing resources that are up to the job. The enemy is neglect—our neglect.

School financial elections are important and deserve a continuing commitment. But a common (and justified) citizen complaint is that "the schools only talk to us when they need money."

Districts with year-round communication programs are the most suc-

cessful in financial elections. They integrate the **what, why, when, for whom and how much** of financial communication into their year-around communication plans.

RULE SEVEN: Little words do the best job of telling the story, and they have impact! Use them to talk about student needs.

Jargon is the crime of every profession, and educators are particularly guilty when it comes to financial communication. Most have a hard time explaining "state equalized valuation," yet it is hooks like this upon which hang verbal and printed presentations.

Financial communications should be student-oriented. Whatever we need money for, we need it most for them. Put pictures of kids on your election brochures instead of—you should forgive the thought—"money trees" and floor plans.

RULE EIGHT: An election only lasts one day. On that day the appeal of the issue has to be brighter, bigger and better than at any time during the campaign.

Some school districts still insist on stuffing millage messages in shopping bags at the supermarket just as Mrs. Jones is being mentally molested by inflated grocery prices.

Properly done, financial communication of a background or "conditioning" nature takes place at strategically timed points during the school year. Communication relating directly to the election (The get-them-to-the-polls-on-time-communication) should be reserved for the 7-to-10-day period prior to election day.

Communicate long messages early in the campaign; shorter messages as election day approaches.

RULE NINE: When people ask questions (and you answer them), you're communicating.

Visualize the person receiving your message as the communicator. When he/she radiates understanding, you have communicated. Grinding out press releases, brochures and other election literature will prove fruitless unless you go after this feedback.

The opportunity to obtain feedback is one reason organizing financial campaigns by elementary attendance areas has proven extremely effective.

tive. That's where people can best understand how the financial issue will affect them . . . and their children.

RULE TEN: Use committees to perform tasks, and assign a manager to manage.

Committees are necessary evils. They can't respond quickly and they can't be held accountable. That's why one person should coordinate the campaign. Given appropriate responsibility and authority, the chairperson can control what is being done, keep the campaign plan intact and use citizens, consultants or whomever for advice.

RULE ELEVEN: Systematic feedback is critical. Without it the communication may inadvertently turn 90 degrees from the audiences.

What elements in the environment have changed? It is critical to know what has been happening "out there" since the first analysis. Answers are needed to questions like: How are people responding to the information being provided. What do they and don't they understand? In short, are we communicating?

Systematic feedback will tell what effect the communicator has been having, and identify necessary mid-course corrections. It also discourages "seat-of-the-pants" decision-making, and muffles those pessimists who keep saying that "everybody is against us."

RULE TWELVE: Check everything—twice!

A superintendent in the Midwest recently ran a superb campaign, passing a bond issue to build a new high school. One snag: an improperly worded ballot meant the district could sell the bonds, but couldn't use the money to construct the high school. Back to the voters!

Even ballots that are properly worded can contribute to defeat. Avoid confusing legal language by consulting with an attorney. Use the ballot as yet another channel for explaining that the "three mill increase" described on the ballot is really a renewal. It is possible to say what you mean (if only in parentheses).

From Another Perspective: Other Pitfalls To Avoid

Gayle Wayne, director, Community Support Services and Communication Services for the Ocean View (Calif.) School District, surveyed

Supramajority Voting Requirements

Several states require supramajorities for the passage of certain fiscal referendums—that is, more than 50% approved by the electorate. Listed below are states that require supramajority votes in bond elections and the supramajority needed.

State	Supramajority Needed in Bond Elections
Nebraska	55%
Iowa	60%
Mississippi	60%
Oklahoma	60%
New York	60%
North Dakota	60%
South Dakota	60%
Washington	60%
West Virginia	60%
California	$\frac{2}{3}$
Idaho	$\frac{2}{3}$
Kentucky	$\frac{2}{3}$
Massachusetts	$\frac{2}{3}$
Missouri	$\frac{2}{3}$
New Hampshire	$\frac{2}{3}$

Supramajority rule has had its greatest impact in California, West Virginia, Missouri, North Dakota, and Washington, according to reports studied by experts. In most cases where the referendum fails to pass the first time, repeat elections eventually result in passage of the financial issue; until that time, however, schools are denied necessary revenue.—Reprinted from *Voter Behavior and Campaign Strategies in School Finance Elections*, Educational Research Service, 1977.

school ballot defeats in California. Writing for a Community Support Service workshop handbook on school finance elections, she cited the following reasons why the issues went down at the polls:

1. Voter registration lists provided by registrar were inaccurate, arrived late and threw off the timetable.
2. Voter turnout was higher than estimated, therefore quota was too low.
3. Rain three weekends in a row hampered blockwork.
4. Board action just prior to election day was not in best interest of the campaign, caused severe adverse publicity.
5. Confusion in leadership; job descriptions not followed.
6. "Living room" blockwork. (i.e. guessing about supportive voters instead of contacting them).
7. High percentage of "senior" residents were influenced by last minute anticampaign.
8. Insufficient number of volunteers recruited, therefore timetable not long enough to complete job.
9. Shortcuts, promises and no follow-up.
10. Get-out-the-vote effort not carefully detailed; phoners were confused and lacked essential resources.
11. Not a total team effort.
12. Local, nearby school district issue spilled over into election campaign. Community identity not well enough established to assure separation of districts and issues.
13. Tax bills came out two days before election.
14. Teacher package presented two weeks before campaign peaked.
15. School board divided on need for the election.
16. Opposition utilized same strategy.

17. Superintendent lacked credibility. Board did also.
18. Pollwatching was thwarted by election officials who didn't post results until too late.
19. Side issues with emotional impact (i.e., year-round schools, double sessions, teacher unrest) overshadowed real financial issue.
20. Quotation taken directly from a post election survey among voters as to why election failed:

"The 2700 people who voted against are _____
School District graduates and cannot read with sufficient comprehension to understand the advantages of a yes vote."

It is evident, then, that many of the same reasons that cost school ballot issues defeat in Michigan were the same issues that caused similar defeats in California.

And the same can be said for just about every other state in which school districts must submit operating budget levies or capital budget bond issues to the electorate.

Avoiding these mistakes could mean victory almost anywhere.

Chapter 4.

Building Budget Credibility

The budget, with its potential for communicating the school district's approach to managing the educational enterprise, can be the foremost public relations tool in any district. The problem is that often it is not.¹

So wrote Tom Shannon, former deputy superintendent of the **San Diego** schools and now executive director of the National School Boards Assn., as he reflected in the California School Boards magazine on the major problem of producing a clear, intelligible budget that the community can understand.

For one of the major problems reported from throughout the country on bond issue and tax levy defeats is the problem of an alienated public voting against an operating or capital budget that they don't understand; a budget compiled in secret, written in financial gobbledygook and adopted by a school board that doesn't really understand it, either.

Understanding—A Key

"The format of a school district budget," Shannon contends, "must be readily understood by any reasonably intelligent person with a secondary school education." A budget format, he says, should be developed "to tell most accurately and completely the budget story . . . to give a person, who lacks both special expertise in finance and an extensive formal education, a good understanding of what the school board will spend his tax dollar for."

Instead, Shannon contends, far too many school systems are content to present their budgets in the "specific and detailed format prescribed by state fiscal authorities," a format that usually "bewilders even private accountants and bookkeepers, as well as businessmen, who have

not had some exposure to the specialized application of government fiscal accounting to school district finance.

Also, Shannon says, "the school district budget must be developed in accordance with a plan known to all," most preferably as outlined in a budget manual setting forth, "in a clear and precise manner," the way the budget is put together. The manual, he says, should include formulas for personnel employment and assignment and an up-to-date calendar of deliberation and action on the budget at both the administrative and school board levels.

Try Zero-Based Budgeting

Another precept for budget development, according to Shannon, is the application of the "maturing concept of 'zero budgeting,'" whereby "the school board and the superintendent and his administrative staff, working with predetermined criteria, construct next year's budget from scratch," rather than by simply building on the current budget.

"This process," Shannon contends, "ensures a current and careful evaluation of all programs and services," and it "precludes the continuance of noncost-effective activities."

Inherent in such a budget process, Shannon adds, is the precept of "full disclosure . . . being totally open with respect to the sources and amounts of revenue and projected expenditures." No gimmicks, budgetary sleight of hand, hidden resources or programs; just the plain budgetary facts publicly and objectively revealed.

Also necessary, Shannon says, are special briefings and budget update bulletins for citizens groups, "watchdog" organizations, employee organizations and the media. While the entire budget building dialogue by the school board and the administration should be public, he says, "there are often gaps that those who are not constantly involved in the budget development process cannot fill without special briefings and bulletins. . . . No matter how elemental and clear the budget format might be, questions will still arise about budget building." And these questions, Shannon says, must be answered.

"If these precepts are observed," Shannon concludes, "the money problems of school district budget building will not disappear, but explaining the budget will promote wide and informed citizen participation in the formulation of priorities for the district's programs."

And these informed citizens are far more apt to vote "yes" on a bond issue or tax levy than are citizens who have been told that the budget is a matter only for the administration and the board of education.

As a matter of fact, many school districts today go beyond one better by adding another critical precept: community involvement in the budget building process.

Choices for Our Children: Montgomery County, Md.

One of the national models in this process is the "Choices for Our Children" budget building process of the **Montgomery County, Md.**, schools.

It was begun in the fall of 1968 after the board of education and the superintendent agreed that the best way to earn public support was to give the public more of a voice in the preparation of the school system's operating budget. School district communication staff member, Donald Hymes, writing in the *Journal of Education Communication* says:

Citizens had always had the chance to testify at public hearings—to plead to the board for their own particular pie-in-the-sky. But they were, in fact, just reacting to a budget document already prepared painstakingly over several months by the superintendent and his staff, and their chances of changing the board's mind with a few minutes of testimony were remote.

The idea was to stimulate the public's interest and involvement in the budget process before the staff began compiling their requests and before the board constructed the ballpark within which their negotiators would work. The public phase of the process, therefore, started in September although negotiations did not begin until November and the actual unveiling of the budget request was not required until January or February.

The "Choices" handbook has changed drastically over the years as the financial picture changed, evolving from a shopping list of improvements to a compilation of items destined for the chopping block. But the choices process has stayed pretty much the same. Each year we:

- Distribute a budget discussion guide to describe the educational situation and financial picture and to tell the public what changes are needed and what they will cost.
- Give citizens an opportunity to tell the board and superintendent what their priorities are *before* system officials start

putting their figures on paper.

- Let the public know what we did about their earlier priorities, and if we didn't do what they asked, tell them why not.

The **budget discussion guide is the keystone** of the process because it is the reference book on which the rest of the year is based. It must be honest, thorough and, most of all, understandable to the average taxpayer.

In a sense, the original "Choices" document published in September 1968 has to be considered the classic. Times were easier then. The financial pinch hadn't hit yet, and the public seemed willing to spend more on its schools because the tax base was growing as fast as the demand for revenue. Therefore, the first booklet was indeed a collection of choices.

There were more than 30 choices, drawn up by staff committees, in the initial 32-page booklet. The guide asked citizens, for example, whether they wanted to introduce foreign language into the elementary school, at a cost of \$1.1 million (and suggested an alternate way of doing it in a three-year installment plan). Or, did they want to add 156 positions to improve the ratio of art, music and physical education teachers, at a cost of \$1.2 million, and so forth. In other words, it explained a need, offered options to meet it, and showed the price tag.

In that first year, Hymes adds, the Montgomery County schools, as a direct result of community priorities, added \$7.3 million to the budget for improvement of staff salaries; added 76 teachers for the disadvantaged; added \$100,000 for free lunches, and added \$150,000 for classroom aides.

"Today, that type of shopping list and even those kinds of improvements may seem like pipe dreams," he says. "They are cited here because they illustrate two very basic requirements of a budget document of this type: They spell out the needs and the costs very clearly, and they show what impact the public actually had on the final budget itself. If citizens get the feeling you're just letting them talk and then do what you were planning to do all along, they'll never listen to you again."

Hymes adds that "another point is that a shopping list of improvements presumes that the system lacks something, and this is as it should be, the superintendent's ego aside. This is not the best of all possible worlds that we want to make better. It's an institution with some failings and some defects we are trying to correct."

Hold Town Meetings

Hymes said town meetings held early in October brought out hundreds of citizens who wanted more details, and a prenegotiations public hearing before the school board in early November saw four times as many people as usual sign up to testify and required three nights for hearings that had usually taken a couple of hours.

And this additional community interest had another positive impact, Hymes reports. It made the school district write its budget to be understandable to the average citizen. He says:

As taxpayers began to scrutinize the school budget with unprecedented zeal, it became obvious that the figures, which previously only accountants could understand, had to be reworked to make sense to the average citizen.

It was no easy chore to go through the hundreds of pages of line items and tally up the costs of specific categories of services. But there was motivation. Faced with a mind-boggling total of \$131,867,078, the average citizen, without looking any further, is apt to cry, "Too much!" And that's a very bad way to start a budget process.

This new look at the Montgomery County budget told the citizens, for example, that of the \$131 million total, more than \$80 million was for the cost of people who work directly with children. That amounted to more than 66 per cent. The much-maligned "administrative overhead" turned out to be only 1.5 per cent of the budget, or \$2 million. In the area of supplies and materials, it means more to the public to see that of the \$4.7 million total, \$3.6 million went directly for pupils and the remainder for offices. With the original budget document carrying only broad categories of "salaries" and "supplies," this kind of breakdown made a lot of difference.

A breakdown of staff tended to combat the frequent charge that great hordes of people are concentrated in the central office bureaucracy. A chart showed, in fact, that 89.3 per cent of the staff were school-related, 9.2 per cent were technicians or maintenance workers and only 1.5 per cent were honest-to-goodness bureaucrats.

Maintain Community Dialogue

The essence of the "Choices" process, Hymes says, is "maintaining a dialogue with the community; providing the public with all the information they need to make sound decisions, and paying attention to their suggestions."

The people of Montgomery County know that "Choices" is not a compilation of platitudes and half-truths. They have come to trust the financial presentations as accurate and know that the needs portrayed are real and the costs projected are honest. This is because there is never a thought of trying to distort or propagandize anywhere in the process. There is no question of the book's purpose: it is published by the superintendent to tell the citizens what needs he perceives in the school system, and ask their advice. But that information is always straight and frank. There are too many savvy citizens out there—many civic groups and PTAs have budget chairmen who could tear the school system apart if it tried to play games with figures. The premise is that if you earn public credibility, you're more apt to get your way than if citizens don't trust you as far as they can throw you.

It would be presumptuous for Montgomery County to brag that the process really worked or even that because of "Choices" the public schools got more operating funds than they would have received without it.

But is the bottom line really just the dollar total? The reason for launching the process in the first place was not only to get money, but to involve citizens in the preparation of the annual operating budget. And there is little question that in reaching that goal, "Choices" has been a great success.

And it is just that kind of support that is so vitally necessary when a school district goes to the polls and asks its voters to approve school construction bond issues or a tax hike for the schools.

While many school districts don't go as far as Montgomery County in involving citizens in the actual budget building process, most are realizing that the community must become more involved somewhere along the way.

The Most Critical Teaching Job: Educating the Community About the Budget

Supt. Tom D. Barkelew of the **Centinela Valley (Calif.) Union High School District** recently told a standing-room-only session at the annual convention of the American Assn. of School Administrators (AASA) that educating the community about budget matters represents "the most critical teaching job" facing superintendents and school boards today.

"Unless you make a superhuman effort to educate school district employes and the public about money—about where it comes from and where it goes—you're doomed to be trapped between the proverbial rock and a hard place." School boards and superintendents, he said, "have too long been content to let the school business official run the financial show, listening only to the bottom line."

Barkelew said he has developed both monthly and quarterly reports on school district finances, which are distributed to each employe, all members of citizen advisory committees, key community communicators and the board of education.

In the two years he has been disseminating this kind of information, he said, "we have not had any of those 'the district is hiding the money' comments, and our board and our administrators feel comfortable in their understanding of the budget."

"It's worth every minute of time you'll put into developing a format people can understand and in making your financial status known by everyone," he said. "I premise."

Board members usually feel defensive about financial accountability, says Donald M. Weaver, vice president of the Centinela Valley Board of Trustees. "It has usually been a waiting game. We were always told the budget was too complex. Now, with these financial reports each month, we can report to our staff and community. And, it's in layman's language. Everyone can understand it." Not only has it established credibility with staff and community, Weaver said, "But it is a continuous check and balance for us. We're no longer on the defensive and we find we are helped in making good decisions all year long."

The quarterly budget data sheets include income and expenditures by category, showing adopted budget, and each quarter's adjustments with appropriate comments. The monthly reports show income, expenditures and cash balance, again by categories, with adjustments, the month's transactions, and totals to date.

At the AASA session, Jack E. Brown, executive secretary of the Ohio Assn. of School Business Officials, described the ultimate test of the administrator as "his ability to interpret the budget realistically to the

So You've Decided to Go Public

If you are going to involve your public in the budget building process, the *Journal of Educational Communication* has the following suggestions:

- **Tell all.** That means a willingness to share any and all financial information with the public, including, if necessary, items you aren't proud of. Attempts to hide or distort will mean instant grief, because there are budget experts out there ready to pounce.
- **Set ground rules and live by them.** Know what you expect citizens to do, and tell them clearly and unequivocally. Tell them what your role in the process will be, and then follow the process.
- **Explain your financial situation in words of one syllable.** Columns of figures mean nothing to the average citizen. Be able to translate your revenues and expenditures into language they can understand and figures they can comprehend.
- **Ditto your educational program.** They won't buy improvements to a program they don't understand in the first place.
- **Give them plenty of opportunities to ask questions.** A budget guide, written in everyday English with a few charts and tables they can understand, is a must. But there must also be meetings, forums or other types of gatherings where members of the community can have their questions answered. If this isn't possible, consider a telephone hotline.
- **Give them a chance to make their recommendations** to the superintendent and the board—while there's still time to have an impact.
- **Report back, when it's all over,** as to what became of their priorities and recommendations. If you followed them, point out where. If you ignored them—and for your own credibility's sake, don't ignore too many—explain why.
- **Gear up for more of the same next year.** Once you're into involvement, there's no getting out. And the chances are it'll be better the second—and the third—time around.

dozens of different publics within the district. Today, the day of programmatic budgeting is upon us—with citizen advocacy groups that want to know. It has to be one of the highest priorities in each school district."

As the budget crunch worsens, more and more school districts are going public with their budget making process, and more and more are directly involving the public.

Zero-based Budgeting, Greater Citizen Involvement: Philadelphia, Pa.

In **Philadelphia**, under Supt. Michael P. Marcuse, the system moved in 1976 toward both zero-based budgeting and greater citizen involvement.

To begin with, each program manager had to justify his entire operation for 1977-78 in a six-page "decision package," showing what his requested funds were to be used for, how they related to the education of children, how the program could be evaluated, how funds could be cut up to 15%, and what alternatives might be available if sufficient money were not available.

Then, each program manager had to defend his or her program not only before a panel of top school district administrators, but before a newly created citizens budget review committee, which had the chance to question and cross-examine every project manager about his or her program, goals and priorities.

The next step was for the superintendent to submit to the board of education, and to the public, the school district's needs budget, together with written recommendations for additions and deletions from the citizens budget review committee, for final board consideration. The recommendations from the citizens committee became major factors in the board's determination of the final budget for 1977-78.

The citizens committee was composed of representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Philadelphia Partnership, the Home and School Council, the Parents Union, the Citizens Committee on Public Education, and other citizen groups vitally interested in the future of the city's schools and its overall economy.

Citizens Work for More Dollars: Rochester, N.Y.

In **Rochester, N.Y.**, continuing budget crisis and budget cuts necessitated citizen involvement in convincing the political powers-that-be

that school aid must be increased. And if the citizens were to be enlisted to help the schools, according to Elizabeth S. Brown, administrative assistant to the superintendent, then they had to be directly involved in the budget building process.

In 1972, Rochester parents were added to the superintendent's budget advisory committee. They, in turn, helped to make a presentation to parents from throughout the city on the reasons for the schools' fiscal plight, and to organize a letter writing campaign to legislators in the state capital for more school aid. The citywide parents were kept constantly informed throughout the six-month budget building process.

Adds Brown:

By the time the budget was finalized, cuts still had to be made but almost all speakers at the city's hearing expressed support for the district's budget or asked for additional resources, not further cuts. At the end of the year we had a cadre of concerned, informed parents who understood that the cure for the district's chronic fiscal sickness lay in reforming the state aid formula. Since then, they and other parents who have become involved have continued to write, telegraph and visit Albany representatives to seek that reform. Student representatives have also become involved. These efforts have supported the board and superintendent as they have lobbied strongly for more aid.

As a result, Brown says, the city council has approved the schools' request each year since the parental involvement campaign began, "even though each year we have sought the maximum increase that is allowed under the state constitution." Also, she adds, "Only one or two people now speak against the district's budget request at the city's hearings, and the awareness level of local voters made school aid an important factor in legislative elections."

For the first two years of the parental involvement process, budget cuts still had to be made, Brown says, "but in the last two years we have been able to restore some staff members and add some new programs" thanks to city taxes and increases in state aid that can be traced, at least in part, "to the efforts of the citizens of Rochester" and to their involvement in the budget building process.

'Sharing Decisions': Dallas, Tex.

The **Dallas Independent School District**, like Montgomery County, Md., has an elaborate, structured budget development process called

"Sharing Decisions." It seeks budget input from teachers, principals, students, parents and community groups.

The process began in the late 1960s as the Dallas school system set out to develop a goals program for the 1970s. Holding that quality education depended on effective, long-range planning, including needs assessment, priority setting and resource allocation, the Dallas school board asked the staff and the community at large to offer their ideas on objectives for the '70s.

What evolved was a "professional model for shared decision-making" in which priority goals were set, managers were appointed to develop specific objectives and program budgets, and both goals and objectives were adjusted from year to year to meet the changing needs of the schools, all with the participation of "literally thousands of Dallasites" during the past several years.

Says Dallas Supt. Nolan Estes: "No group has a monopoly on wisdom when it comes to making educational decisions. That's why we've involved everyone with a direct interest in education—students, parents, teachers, support staff and administrators—in assessing needs and assigning priorities."

The first component of the model involved the setting up of a **District Communications Committee (DCC)**, with every employe group in the school system represented. The DCC holds regular monthly meetings to make recommendations to the superintendent for action on school district matters, including the budget.

Another component is an elected **Principals Advisory Committee** to the superintendent, a field advisory team of administrators for rapid input on critical issues. A full-time person who is housed in the central office serves on the superintendent's cabinet as an **ombudsman** for all administrators and as a special assistant to the superintendent.

At the building level, each principal in the district's 185 schools has a teacher advisory committee composed of teachers selected by their peers to represent the views of the faculty.

Also, an **extensive leadership program for middle and high school students** focuses young energies on school improvement and information efforts and develops members for SUPER-SAC, the superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, which meets regularly with the superintendent to present the students' point of view.

Parent involvement committees range from bilingual and career education to textbooks and food services, and the superintendent meets regularly with clusters of local PTA officers in various parts of the city and with the executive committee of the Dallas PTA City Council.

All these committees become part of **Operation Involvement**, "a systematic effort to assist the board of education in assessing needs,

assigning priorities and allocating resources as part of the annual budgeting process."

Operation Involvement members include a representative of each school's teacher advisory committee, 45 students, 20 parents, members of the District Communications Committee, principal representatives, and central office staff. The members are divided into 25 small groups to focus on various areas of the school program. Employees are given released time for monthly sessions, which range from discussions on the latest school problem to field trips for background information.

Several times a year, representatives from each small group meet with the board of education to assist first hand in setting program priorities. Each representative comes armed with input gained through extensive discussions at the individual school level.

"There is little doubt," Estes says, "that the effort has led to better decisions. During these times of crisis management, it is only through such involvement that decision-making can be improved." As a matter of fact, Estes says, "the people in Dallas believe that the decision-making process is often as important as the decision itself."

It is certainly not startling, then, that using this system of continuous community involvement in the Dallas schools, the school district was able to easily pass a \$80 million bond issue in December 1976, for the improvement of 100 schools by a vote of 19,451 to 13,693.

With a community, and a staff, as closely involved with all aspects of the school system as they are in Dallas, the support for school improvement projects like the city's recently approved \$80 million bond issue is built into the communication process.

It does not have to be conceived, nurtured and prompted to go out and convince the community to support school improvement. It is already formed, informed and ready to go; ready to communicate to the community all the knowledge it has gained through its ongoing, systematized communication process with the school district.

The object of the process is credibility; credibility for education, for schools, for school personnel and for the children they serve.

The process itself is communication; communication with the many publics that are involved in a school system, internal and external publics alike. When that communication is frank and full and open and honest, the result is credibility.

And the result of credibility—particularly budget credibility—is the kind of community confidence without which a school district bond issue or tax levy doesn't stand a ghost of a chance.

Chapter 5.

Taking the Community's Pulse

Every community has its own pulse, its own heartbeat. Like snowflakes and fingerprints, no two communities are exactly alike. There are different feelings, different emotions, different likes and dislikes, different causes for agitation and alarm, different reasons for voting "yes"—or "no"—on a bond issue or tax levy.

So before an election is announced, before a school district attempts to operate on a school district's pocketbook for a healthy piece of its change, it is vitally essential to take the community's pulse and its blood pressure, too.

The best way is through a continuous, 12-month, two-way dialogue with the parents and community groups and individual movers and shakers through a planned, professional program of community relations and communication.

But there is another way, too, for the school district who may have lost contact somewhere along the line with the pulse of its community. And that is a community attitude survey. Not just a few telephone calls to PTA presidents or leaders of a local service club, but a scientific, systematized, random sampling of attitudes throughout the community; young voters and old, with or without children in the schools, employed and unemployed, friendly and hostile alike.

A good, professional opinion research organization can scientifically survey a few hundred voters in your school district and tell you whether or not your bond issue or tax levy has a chance of passing, and if it does, what attitudinal roadblocks you must overcome.

Or you can conduct one yourself as many districts do. Such an attitude survey can even be done over the telephone in a matter of hours as long as you have an accurate voter profile of your school district from which to draw the random sample.

Telephone Survey Succeeds While Printed One Failed

Results of a recent telephone survey of registered voters in the **Southfield Schools in Oakland County, Mich.**—undertaken after a mailed, printed questionnaire failed miserably—were emerging from a high speed printer in the district's central office two hours after the first telephone call was made.

The questionnaire had been developed by a citizen committee on communication. It was published in the district's newsletter in January 1975 and distributed to 23,000 residents. Thirteen responded to the invitation to fill out and return the questionnaire.

Resolving to have a more representative response from the community, the committee then asked for volunteers from the PTA Council for two and a half hours. Volunteers met at the district central office at 4:30 p.m. for training in telephone interviewing and were given lists of voters systematically sampled from the rolls of registered voters. All telephones in the central office were commandeered for the interviews.

Calling began at 5 p.m. and ended shortly after 7. Responses were coded on optically scannable sheets and were started through a slow speed scanner.

The scanner was ready to take the final sheet when the most persistent interviewer said "Thank you" to the last respondent.

Tom Schultz, in charge of Southfield's data processing operation, had test run the Southfield questionnaire on Oakland Schools' ASK computer program. He was sure that everything worked.

Turnaround time was less than ten minutes.

Elliot Burns, director of finance and purchasing for Southfield, conceived the fast survey method and worked with Polly Carithers of Oakland Schools to develop it.

"The reason wasn't urgency," said Burns. "We just wanted the job done. We had the telephones, the volunteers, and the data processing resources. However, it is not hard to imagine situations in which the ability to complete a survey in two hours and to have a computer analysis of the results ten minutes later would be very advantageous."

Next time Southfield surveys, Burns wants all telephone numbers looked up in advance so that volunteers do not have to use prime phone time (5 to 7 p.m.) finding numbers. Next time, he said there should be twenty callers instead of fourteen. Next time, urgent or not, he plans to follow the same basic procedure.

The purpose of this chapter is not to tell educators how to construct a valid random sample of a school district's registered voters. That's a job for a specialist in opinion research.

The sampling system involves such matters as a community universe, confidence limits, determining a sample size and proper skip intervals, and the use of a table of random numbers.

But it easily can and, in many instances, should be done.

Let the Citizens Do It

And there is one more way to take the community's pulse. It's to have the community take it themselves.

The process involves a citizens advisory committee to the board of education to help determine whether or not a bond issue should be held in the first place.

Suggests Odie Dickens of the **Clayton, Mo.**, schools:

Invite a blue ribbon citizens committee to study the facility needs well in advance of the bond issue proposal. Take their recommendations seriously. If the administration is right, the citizens will reach the same conclusion. If the administration proposals are haywire, it's better to know about that before the bond issue election rather than after.

Gordon L. Carter, former superintendent, **Bellingham, Wash.**, advises:

1. *Present necessary background materials* at early meetings. Administration should be present to offer assistance.
2. *Keep school board apprised* of deliberations of committee. Presence of one or two board members at committee sessions is desirable and strongly recommended.
3. The committee should be allowed to *meet without administrators or board representative* at the discretion of the chairman. Resource people should be made available to the committee as needed.
4. The report of the committee to the board should be *concise* and must be in *written form*.

The committee should consist of community leaders, interested in both the schools and the future of the community. Leaders of parent, civic, community and service organizations should be involved, as well as whatever other citizens are deemed necessary by the board of education.

In the **Plano (Tex.) Independent School District**, each member of the school board and city council nominated 5 to 10 people to serve on a citizens committee to advise the school district on future building needs and ways to finance them.

Seven Solid Rules of Thumb

If you're looking for groups of people who would most likely vote "yes" on a school bond issue or tax levy, C. Montgomery Johnson and Virginia Clocksin, in their booklet, *School Bond Issues: Pass-Fail*, suggest the following "Seven Solid Rules of Thumb:"

1. The higher the person's level of educational attainment, the greater the level of school support, both in terms of voter turnout and in terms of favorable vote. The lower the level of educational attainment, the lower the turnout and the more negative the votes cast.
2. Considered by occupation, business and professional persons consistently turn out the highest proportion of their numbers in elections and also consistently provide the highest percent favorable school support of any occupational groupings.
3. Unless reasons can be specifically tailored to overcome their tax concerns, the occupational groups which consistently produce the highest percent of negative vote in special school elections are retired persons (the elderly) and farmers.
4. The higher the family income, the more likely those eligible to vote actually vote and the higher the percent favorable cast for schools.
5. The younger the adult, the less likely he or she is registered to vote. If registered, the less likely he or she will actually vote.
6. Parents of school age children are consistently better supporters of school levy and bond campaigns than adults without children in school.
7. Women turn out better than men in local special school district elections and consistently deliver a higher percent more favorable vote than men voters.

Each was mailed a personal letter of invitation to serve and asked to list a subcommittee in which he or she was interested. Half of the 200 persons invited agreed to serve on the committee.

After extensive examination of the school district's capital needs, the committee recommended a \$25 million building program, including a \$2.5 million artificial-surface football and soccer stadium, a luxury that most probably would have meant defeat for the entire bond issue if it had come from the school board itself.

But the citizens committee backed the building program to the hilt and took part in a massive telephone campaign to get out the vote.

"That," says Plano public information director Jerald E. Smith, "really made the difference."

The First Announcement

When you sit down amid the rubble of a bond issue or tax levy loss, you usually ask yourself, "Where did we go wrong?"

And more often than not, the answer is, "Right at the very beginning!"

With the very first announcement you made.

Now, you'd think that with all the surveying and campaigning and citizens committees and news releases and community meetings and school board announcements sprinkled across the front pages of the local newspapers that the community would see the logic of your position and vote "yes," even if they were against you in the beginning.

Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case.

As a matter of fact, the opposite may be true.

A recent survey of 1,000 bond elections in Iowa showed that at least 75% of the voters made up their minds the very first time they heard of the issue.

So your first campaign announcement may be the most critical step you take in the entire campaign.

Gayle Wayne of the Ocean View (Calif.) Schools, writing for California's School Research and Service Corp., puts it this way:

Many elections are lost before they get started. Madison Avenue pays high salaries to copywriters for turning out copy that will move people to buy a particular product. Frankly, the professionals believe they can sell anything. And after seeing how effectively they convinced America to buy striped toothpaste, we are ready to agree.

Guidelines for the Message

Wayne, a veteran of more than 18 school finance elections, has the following suggestions for an initial message to sell a bond issue or tax levy to a community

1. **Make the message easy to understand.** Avoid technical, educational terms and sophisticated concepts. Tread lightly on figures and statistics. Numbers frighten people.
2. **Show a direct relationship between what you are asking for and what people want for their children.** There must be a compelling reason for taxpayers to reach into their pocket and give you their hard-earned money. That reason should be in your message. Remember, everyone wants, and in these days is very worried about, the future success of their children. Gear your message to this common goal of parents. For those without children the message should show how the money will make it a better, stronger, more successful community.
3. **Personalize wherever possible.** "Your child" is stronger than "the children and youth of this community."
4. **Both positive and negative messages work.** A positive message that is geared to peoples' goals works best in most cases. People with children in your schools will read a headline that says "Lincoln District Students Score High on College Entrance Exams."

However, if a negative message is the truth, it may also be effective. "Double Sessions Slated Here Next Year if Election Fails."

If you can work both a positive and negative idea into your message, it will increase its effectiveness—If the election passes we will build a new school, eliminate overcrowding and "your child" will have a better chance to learn and succeed. If the election fails, double sessions may affect your child's future.

5. **Every word in the sentence should help get the message across.** Eliminate any words that do not help tell your story; "very," "much," "it is interesting to note," are weak. The word **tax** is negative and tends to make readers look away as if it were going to sear their eyeballs.

6. **Paragraphs should be short, but don't be afraid of a long story.** Research has shown that long ads often have better persuasive power than short ads if the long story is interesting and the message is tuned to the readers' goals.

Move from Emotional to Factual

Michigan's Banach suggests:

Campaign literature should move from factual to emotional—early appeals should be to the head; later appeals to the heart and stomach.

The keys to good literature: **One**—Know your audience; **Two**—Know what your literature is designed to do; **Three**—Develop a plan and follow it;

Take a hard look at the copy:

- ✓ Does it stimulate reader interest?
- ✓ Does it stir the reader's imagination?
- ✓ Does it contain good reasons for the reader to act?
- ✓ Are the claims believable?
- ✓ Does the reader feel "This was written to me"?
- ✓ Is the language conversational and understandable?
- ✓ Does the copy contain personal words?
- ✓ Is the opening to the point?
- ✓ Are your thoughts in logical order?
- ✓ Are your sentences and paragraphs short?

Keep It Simple: Use Newsprint

Even the type of publications used to promote passage of a bond issue or a tax levy can have an impact on the final vote.

If you use expensive looking newsletters or brochures or pamphlets or posters you're usually in trouble. The people who are against your election issue are against such material because they think it's a waste of taxpayers' money. And they are trying to convince everyone else in the community that this is so.

Nothing makes their task easier than a slick, colorful, artistic, Madison Avenue type publication that says, by its own cost, that you are, in fact, wasting the taxpayers' money.

Use newsprint for your newsletter. Not only is it the cheapest paper available, but it's the paper on which the residents of your community get the rest of their printed news. If the *New York Times* can use newsprint, so can you.

And stick to basic black and one other color, perhaps, to emphasize certain charts or graphs or important figures. Make that color blue. It may sound funny in a case like this, but psychologists will tell you red is an angry color, a color that encourages emotion. And with a hot finance election, you've got all the emotion you can handle. Blue, on the other hand, is a cool, unemotional color.

Stick to the Facts

When putting out a newsletter on a school election issue, it is essential to stick to the facts. Leave the emotional appeal to your word-of-mouth campaign. Threats and overemotional appeals can be taken out of context, reprinted and used against you. No one likes to be told that if the school issue doesn't pass the world will come to an end. They know it won't and they will be insulted by your trying to tell them it will.

Cutbacks forced by the loss of a budget issue are one thing. The school district crumbling down around its foundations is quite another.

A good example of a factual, objective approach to budget issue newsletters is the April 1976, issue of the Clayton (Mo.) School News. Its pitch is headlined this way:

**Do our schools *really* need money?
Here are the facts—*You* be the judge**

The story talked about educational excellence in Clayton, student achievement, special programs. And it argued that a raise for the school district's teachers was justified since 82% held at least a masters degree, 95% had more than six years teaching experience, teacher turnover was the lowest in the county, and it costs money to keep this kind of excellent teachers.

The story also gave objective statistics on tax rates—stagnant for six years and the lowest in the county—inflation, decreasing revenues, budget cuts of \$300,000 that would be made even if the tax election passed, and other factual financial data.

The story finally asked the question, what if the issue is defeated? and it answered that question, again in a calm, objective, professional way:

No threats intended here, just simple arithmetic. If the tax increase does not receive the required simple majority approval, a drasti-

cally reduced, \$6,000,000 budget would be necessary. The Board has indicated that it would reexamine the entire budget at that time.

In addition to the \$300,000 in budget cuts already planned, it would be necessary to reduce the budget by at least another \$200,000. Such austerity would jeopardize the excellence which has been carefully built into the schools.

Clayton Schools have a proud heritage. They are viable now, but they are vulnerable. Any erosion of standards would be reflected in every facet of the school community.

The cost to an individual taxpayer is minimal but the investment is substantial. You be the judge.

Have A Theme

One essential part of your first announcement is a theme. Perhaps a story from Philadelphia best emphasizes the point.

There, in the late 1960s, a \$90 million school construction bond issue—six times larger than the school district had ever tried before—was in serious trouble. The theme was geared toward replacing “fire-trap” schools. And since there hadn’t been a school destroyed by fire during a school day in the school district’s 150-year history, the public wasn’t buying this implied threat.

Then outspoken school board president Richardson Dilworth, a former reform mayor of Philadelphia, went to Detroit to make a speech at a political symposium.

In his speech, Dilworth castigated, among others, Philadelphia’s teachers union (a bunch of money-grubbing, powermongers), the city’s Catholic schools (they’re prejudiced because they don’t want to accept black kids) and the city’s Republicans (as incompetent ancestors of Detroit’s notorious boss, “Bathhouse John” Coughlan).

Unfortunately, he didn’t know there were reporters in the audience, and the next morning the Dilworth barbs were spread all over the first page of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*.

The uproar was deafening, and the bond issue was kissed goodbye.

But Dilworth held a news conference, apologized, and pleaded, “Don’t take it out on the kids.”

It was like magic. Someone mentioned kids. The newspapers picked it up. Editorials appeared, headlined, “Don’t take it out on the kids.” Citizens groups, parent organizations and the school board picked it up. “Don’t take it out on the kids.”

And the voters didn't. A bond issue that was in serious trouble, then all but dead, passed by 55%-45%.

California's Gayle Wayne puts it this way:

Themes are a rallying point that can bring an element of unity to your campaign. They must be developed with care, imagination and lots of local political intuition.

A campaign theme should be an honest combination of facts translated into an emotional pitch. For every person who votes with his/her head and pocketbook, there are those who vote with their hearts. Many vote by both heart and head. Therefore, gear your theme to both.

Don't sell BONDS or BASE REVENUES. SELL KIDS. In one district rebuilding condemned schools, the first election failed . . . its theme: "Vote yes for school bonds." The second time around, more attention to both theme and strategy paid off. The theme: "Safety for Children: Vote yes June 6." Workers wore big safety pins with "Vote June 6" on them. The issue passed 2 to 1 the second time.

Emphasize Education and Students

Finally, your announcement must emphasize education and students, **not** finances and taxes. Certainly, financial data is important and must be included, but people weighing a "yes" vote are more interested in what the added money will mean in the terms of educational excellence than they are in hard data.

Studies of what voters say they want to know about school finance elections show that the electorate is concerned about how schools are run, what kind of curriculum they offer, and the methods of their teaching staffs.

They are concerned, too, about discipline, the quality of teaching, and why Johnny can't read as well as he's supposed to.

Thus, the school finance election MUST be prepared, and publicized, around an educational plan; an educational plan that shows emphatically and conclusively why the taxpayers should reach into their pockets, once again, to support the public schools.

Organizing the Campaign

The first step in conducting any school finance campaign is to have unanimous commitment from the board of education. Without it, your campaign is in deep trouble before it gets off the ground.

Patricia J. Harper, former board member and finance chairperson of the Willingboro, N.J., Board of Education, has this advice for members of the board:

Do your share of budget work. Attend and participate in all meetings on the budget. Don't sit back, let someone else do the work (whether that someone is administration or other board members) and then decide that out of \$20 million your personally can't support a \$50,000 expenditure, so you'll just vote NO on the whole package. Your NO vote will be a large factor in the budget defeat.

Remember, we work in a democracy. It is not a dictatorship. That's why there are five-, seven- or nine-member boards. It is just impossible to give all board members exactly what they think is a perfect budget. If you agree with the majority of the budget, vote for it and support it publicly. Unite your board. When only one board member speaks against the budget, it severely reduces the chances of passage.

To administrators, she says:

Show and Tell your own board. A divided board defeats a school budget. A few board members giving a "no" vote on the budget with maybe one or more running for reelection is a perfect setup for a budget defeat. If possible, actively involve any negative board members in building the budget.

Setting the Date

The next step is a small but extremely important one: **setting the date**. Too many school bond issues and tax levy campaigns have gone down to defeat simply because they were held at the wrong time.

And advantageous dates vary almost totally from community to community.

Take Philadelphia, for example. After several school bond issue successes of up to \$90 million in November general elections, with from 125,000 to 150,000 "yes" votes against a fairly steady 100,000 "no" votes, the board of education decided to go for bond issue in a May primary.

True, far less voters come out for a primary than a general election, but the percentages of "yes" and "no" votes should stay about the same. Right? Wrong! It turned out that the same steady flow of 100,000 adamant "no" voters came to the polls, as usual, but only 88,000 "yes" voters bothered to come out, and the result was a staggering and embarrassing defeat. The school district stuck to general elections from then on and never lost another bond issue.

But in smaller school districts, sometimes the story is exactly the opposite. With many local and national issues distracting the voters in the general election, bond issues have become lost on the ballot and defeated as the "no" voters took the time to seek out the proper lever and pull it, while the potential "yes" voters just never got around to it.

Some school districts have found that the best time for the passage of a school issue is at a **special election** called for just that purpose, where everyone's energies can be concentrated on the single issue of "saving the schools."

Even the day of the week sometimes makes a difference, with voters more apt to vote "yes" on a payday Friday than a blue Monday, or for some other, usually unexplained reason. In one school district, election issues always seemed to do better in the middle of bitter-cold January.

Also, beware of holding school elections in the midst of local political battles, or after several hundred workers have been laid off at the local plant, or just after a school strike or a healthy raise for teachers and other school employees.

In short, research the best time and date for a school election. Talk to local political leaders and observers, look thoroughly at past voter turnout data and voting patterns. Be cognizant of community emotions that can be turned against a school election issue.

Establish a Citizens Committee

The next step is selecting a broad-based citizens committee to pro-

mote passage of the election issue and a small steering committee to guide the larger group.

The committee should be citizen dominated and representative of all community power structures. It should involve PTAs, civic and service organizations, community clubs, school district staff and hand-picked community leaders; in short, anyone you feel can be helpful in spreading the word about the election issue and turning-out a "yes" vote.

This committee will help give credibility to the election issue and provide a legal vehicle for raising money and conducting a promotional campaign.

But most of all, it will supply the manpower to conduct the campaign.

One school district that is a strong proponent of such citizen committees is Bellingham, Wash., which must submit excess levies for maintenance and operation of the electorate each year to provide between 20% and 40% of the district's general funds.

"Gaining voter acceptance of the ever-increasing burden of local school support," says former Bellingham Supt. Gordon Carter, "calls for a maximum level of lay input. The citizens advisory committee can provide such input."

Carter offers the following guidelines in setting up the committee and helping it direct campaign activities:

SETTING UP THE COMMITTEE

1. **Define the charge** of the committee and **set beginning and ending dates** of committee activity.
2. **Select a chairperson** and allow him/her to recruit committee members. The chairperson should advise the potential members of the committee charge when recruiting them.
3. **Assist the chairperson in selecting a cross section** of laypersons.
4. **Help the chairperson devise a realistic time line** and meeting schedule.

DIRECTING CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

1. The committee should **plan** and **direct** campaign activities. **Fund raising** for campaign expenditures is a committee responsibility.

2. **Specific campaign activities** can be determined through brainstorming or other planning tactics. Care should be taken in matching individuals to activities.

- a. Personal contact—speaker's bureau, telephone committees, doorbelling.
- b. Mass media—progress reports at board meetings, news conferences and releases, editorial comment, feature stories, public services.
- c. Paid advertising—newspaper, display advertising, radio spots.
- d. Support of community groups—endorsement, coffee klatsches.

"Whenever lay input is used, some problems may arise," Carter says. "But the properly briefed lay committee will understand the nature of its chore and not try to supplant the school board as a policy making body. It is most important, Carter adds, "that each committee member understand his function and know when that job has been completed."

Establishing a Steering Committee

A steering committee for the campaign should be established early in the planning stages. The make-up of such a committee must include all key chairpersons for the various aspects of a campaign organization. They should meet frequently for planning, implementing and evaluating as the campaign progresses to make sure all bases are covered and that the campaign strategies are being implemented on schedule.

The makeup of the steering committee should be as follows:

- **General Chairperson**—prominent person in the community; someone with well-known background of community service; articulate; non-controversial; to serve as a figurehead, rather than a working director of the campaign; allows free use of his or her name for prestige purposes.
- **Campaign Coordinator**—the driving force behind the campaign; a highly organized, work-oriented person with the ability to deal quickly and effectively with detail, problems and pressure; a person who knows and understands the school district, its teachers and its principals; must have the confidence of the superintendent and the board, and should have "unflappable optimism." The school

district's communication specialist or top school district administrator is a good bet for this position.

- **Finance Chairperson**—helps raise money necessary to run the campaign; keeps records on how it is spent; someone with a knack for raising money and handling campaign finances.
- **Public Relations Chairperson**—someone to coordinate media relations, community relations, publications and all campaign literature; could be the school district's communication specialist, or the head of a local PR agency. Must know communications and PR, and must have authority to say "no" to committee proposals that won't fly, particularly with the press, radio and TV.
- **Campaign Volunteers Chairperson**—to coordinate all clerical work including copying, transcribing, collating, folding, stapling, counting and sorting, preparation of mailing labels, etc.; person must have the ability to plan ahead, work under pressure and disassemble large tasks into small, workable ones. A good, experienced, energetic secretary, either from the school district or community, can handle this one.
- **Get Out the Vote Chairperson**—coordinates and assesses the effectiveness of district-wide efforts to locate "yes" voters, make sure they are registered, and get them to the polls. Works with precinct workers, block workers and telephone workers to make sure all possible "yes" voters get to the polls. This job should be filled by a community person; someone with a thorough knowledge of the precinct level political process of winning an election. A local political committeeperson or political leader would be ideal.
- **Volunteer Chairperson**—a critical job; someone to recruit the workers needed throughout the school district, at each school location, to conduct house to house searches for "yes" voters, operate the phones, and see to it that enough manpower is available to do all the many jobs necessary to assure a successful election campaign. Experience has shown that this manpower is most readily accessible through parent organizations who have a stake in the outcome of the election: better schools for their children. A PTA leader might make a good chairperson for this activity.
- **Building-Level Chairperson**—someone, most likely from within the school system, to coordinate the vitally necessary building-level campaigns to be run by every principal in the school district.

Identifying Political Procedures

Once the campaign and steering committees have been put together, the next step is to work out the political procedures necessary for a successful election. There's nothing dramatic about it; no mysterious formula for success; just good, hard, political digging. Perhaps Abraham Lincoln said it best more than 100 years ago:

The whole state must be so well organized
that every Whig can be brought to the polls.
So divide the country into small districts
and appoint in each a committee.

Make a perfect list of the voters
and ascertain with certainty

for whom they will vote

Keep a constant watch on the doubtful voters
and have them talked to by those

in whom they have the most confidence. . . .

On election days see that every Whig
is brought to the polls.

The formula for political success really hasn't changed much in 100 years:

First, you have to find out who is going to vote "yes." Then you have to make sure they are registered to vote. Then you have to make sure they get to the polls.

Using Block Workers

Odie Dickens of the Clayton, Mo., schools puts it this way:

At gut level, the campaign depends entirely on the dedication of **block workers**. They are the ones who are going to have to contact everybody in the community, explain the issues and identify the positive voters. Make sure you give them tender, loving care. Be certain the person who recruits them realizes what's at stake in the campaign and is personally committed to the campaign as a number one priority. Identify good block workers and then give them instruction, information, and assistance. Be sure that the block workers are trained, informed, and enthusiastic. Write specific, friendly, "all-in-this-together instructions."

She adds: "The doorbell-ringing, personal contact with all parents and as many other patrons as we can possible manage is, very realistically, the single most important effort of the whole campaign. As it goes, so goes the election."

Each bell-ringer in Clayton was issued the following instructions:

In general, you are asked to make two contacts:

1. A personal visit with each parent and a visit to selected nonparents between March 25 and April 2.
 - Leave the blue "Be Proud" flyer and chat for a minute, to see if they appear supportive of the levy. Use a ouija board if you must, but please **Do Not Ask How They Are Going To Vote**. Gallup may get by with it, we won't.
 - Record on your blank form the name, address, and phone number of every supportive contact.
 - If questions arise which you can't answer, direct them to the central office, 726-2550. Or, take the initiative—get their phone number and ask someone (your principal, a board member, the public information office, etc.) to contact them.
 - Push absentee ballots.
 - Make the Tax Relief information for senior citizens available when appropriate.
2. The other contact is a telephone reminder call to vote made between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. on Election Day, April 6. You wouldn't believe how many people forget!

Each bell-ringer was given a directions and information packet containing:

1. Enough blue "Be Proud" flyers for distribution to each of your assigned households. These are brief voting reminders for the person who is willing to invest only a few minutes in learning about the tax issue.
2. Several copies of the yellow brochure with a much more comprehensive explanation. Besides having one for yourself, you should have extras for those who are interested.

3. A profile of the Clayton School District containing a collection of information you may need. This is your "Linus Blanket." If you get a question you can't answer even with this help, please call the district, 726-2550.
4. Several absentee ballot applications.
5. Several copies of "Circuit Breaker" tax relief information for Senior Citizens.
6. A blank form for your convenience to keep track of whom you've talked to to facilitate your Election Day reminder calls.

Guidelines for Block Workers

California's School Research and Service Corporation suggests the following guidelines for block workers:

Where To Spend Your Efforts:

1. Call **only** on those voters on your registration list. Do not take time to call on others.
2. **Don't** devote time to the voter already **opposed** to this proposal.
3. **Don't** spend important time with the voter already solidly in favor of the issue **Except on election day**.
4. **Work hard** with the voters who seem undecided or apathetic. Make each one feel how important his "yes" vote is.
5. Record your estimate of the voter's attitude—Yes (Y), No (N), Maybe (?)—beside his name on your list of registered voters.
6. Record the names of willing workers on a separate sheet and give your precinct captain this information.

What To Talk About:

1. **Always identify yourself** at once, by name and affiliation. Check the name of the person and verify that he is registered to vote at that address. You might say:

Good morning, I am Mrs. John Jones, one of your neighbors. I live just a block from you on Warner Avenue. I am working with the Citizens Information Committee for the school election on February 9.

2. Using a friendly approach, and in a spirit of helpfulness, ask if there is anything about the issue on which the voter would like more information. Be pleasant and **avoid any arguments** with anyone, including the committed "no" voter.
3. Supply the voter with a copy of the literature you have been given. Aim to get the fact sheet read after you have gone by pointing out paragraphs which you think might be of special interest.
4. About voter's questions—You'll be prepared to answer most questions, but if you don't know the answer, suggest that he phone the school district for authoritative information . . . or, say you'll find out and call back . . . and then **do call back**.
5. **Offer to make arrangements for election day.** If you or the favorable voter can foresee that he/she will have difficulty getting to the polls, arrange in advance through your captain for transportation, baby-sitter or whatever is needed.
6. **Final Shots**—Stress the importance of this election for the maintenance of the schools; Repeat the exact day and date of the election and urge an early vote on election day; **Tell the voter where his polling place is.**

Using the Telephone

But it all doesn't have to be door-to-door. Once again, the telephone survey plays an important role.

According to Dick Grosenbaugh, administrative assistant for public information, **Springfield, Mo.**, schools, the following procedures were used during a recent election campaign.

A bank of telephones was set up in the studios of the local educational television station which were manned by volunteers for several weeks prior to the election. The callers worked from a computer printout of all registered voters in the district on which had been noted (from going through poll books) all the persons who actually voted in an election held in April.

The callers asked if the person was in favor of, against or undecided on the levy and marked the response beside his or her name. **If for the levy**, they were reminded to vote. **If against the levy**, no real effort was made to change their minds although questions were answered. An effort was made to convince the uncommitted voter to swing in favor of the levy. Fact sheets prepared by the Office of Public Information were available.

On the day before and the day of the election, a second call was made to all those called previously who had indicated they were in favor of the levy reminding them to vote. One additional benefit surfaced. The questions raised by the telephone survey were valuable in targeting media presentations on election issues.

Voter Registration: A Key

But whatever method is used to seek out potential "yes" voters, there is always a pressing need to see that they are registered to vote.

The first suggestion to register should be made at the initial canvass, but follow-up usually will be needed.

This should be accomplished through a second telephone call offering such assistance as free babysitting, a ride to the board of elections, or information on absentee ballots.

The important thing is, don't give up. New voters can make or break your campaign.

Says Gayle Wayne:

It has been found that of the people a campaign committee can register to vote, 85% to 90% of those new registrants will end up supporting that committee's cause. The reason for this is simple: The personal attention and follow-up which accompanies an effective voter registration program provides the new voter with information as well as a personal endorsement at less-than-arms-length.

The sole objective of registering new voters is to increase the number of yes votes that can be counted on election day. In a real and practical sense, these new votes are bonus votes. And in a special election, when the margin of difference is likely to be low, these bonus votes assume added impact.

Wayne suggests concentrating registration efforts on 18-year-olds, parents new to a school district, adult education students, the school district staff, school volunteers and residents new to the community.

The **Utica, Mich.**, schools make sure someone is on hand to talk to every new parent as he or she registers children before the opening of the school term. Voter registration forms are available right at the school, and all the necessary paper work is taken care of right there. Each new parent is then sent mail supporting the election cause, and is called on election day to make sure if he or she has voted.

In **Springfield, Mo.**, high school seniors about to turn 18 are contacted by mail. The school district's letter says, in part:

Dear New Voter:

Our records show that you are now, or soon will be, 18 years of age and able to vote for the first time. I hope that you will make use of the valuable thing you have just been given . . . the vote.

This is a particularly important year for all to vote because of a great many of our local, state and national officials will be up for election and there will be a number of important issues on the ballot.

I hope that you will particularly vote in the November 2 general election and, if you will be 18 by September 28, I would also encourage you to vote in an election on that date to increase the school tax levy by 48 cents to help the school district weather its financial crisis.

All qualified voters in Greene County must be registered to vote in any election. That registration is easy to accomplish at the County Clerk's office in the Greene County Courthouse at Boonville and Central, in the Bookmobile or at special registration points that might be set up in the future. You might call the Clerk's office, 869-3581, if you have questions.

Please take time to register . . . the first step . . . and then to vote on the vital issues that will be coming up in the next few months. By voting this first time you'll hopefully develop a proud lifelong habit of participation in your government.

Don't Forget the Mail

Letters to new voters are just one aspect of a good mail campaign for passage of a bond issue or tax levy election.

For districts that decide against the full-blown, door-to-door, face-to-face, person-to-person type campaign, a letter to all registered voters usually is the next best thing.

As a matter of fact, some districts use it as an integral part of their person-to-person campaign, to make sure that voters who couldn't be reached personally still get a pitch via the mails.

Information contained in such a letter should be clear and concise and follow the suggestions of the earlier chapter on campaign announcements. A good example is the following letter from the "Kids Count Committee" promoting passage of recent millage and bond questions for the Utica, Mich. schools.

Dear Utica Community Schools Resident:

Someone told us you care! We do too. That's why we want to tell you we're voting for both the bonds and operations millage proposals Tuesday, October 7. Because we care about our children.

Sure milk prices are up. Bread prices are up. But we can't stop serving our kids milk. Balanced diets are important for them.

School costs are up, too. Electricity costs are up. Paper costs are up. Gasoline costs—ouch! But continuing a balanced educational diet for students is important, too.

The enclosed brochure gives you the facts on what we can keep and what will have to go if we don't join together with our YES YES votes on October 7.

We're voting YES on the 2.50 mill operations millage proposal to keep a well-balanced educational diet for our children and to continue to get full community use out of our investment in good schools. This YES vote won't cost most of us more than a loaf of bread or a gallon of gas a week.

We're voting YES on the \$28 million bond issue. These bonds mean new buildings to keep up with enrollment growth. They mean better buildings, too. Every building will be improved. Yours, mine, every single one. Bonds mean a junior high school for all junior high students.

**YES FOR BONDS
+ YES FOR MILLAGE**

**Kids Count Committee
Darleen Hochradel
Barbara Pulice**

= YES YES FOR OUR KIDS ON OCT. 7 Co-Chairpersons

The Communications' Specialist: The Staff Backbone

Another critically important aspect of any bond issue or tax levy campaign is the school district's overall public relations efforts. A school system's public relations or communications specialist serves as the staff backbone for the citizens campaign committee's public relations efforts and in most cases serves as the behind the scene's campaign coordinator.

In a recent bond issue campaign, Joanie Flatt, director of community relations for the **Mesa, Ariz., Public Schools**, performed the following functions:

1. Prepared the bond issue facts and figures packet, which was given to advisory committee members. This was also distributed to the various employees and citizens present at bond issue presentations.
2. Prepared the bond issue brochure as a special edition of our community newsletter. It was sent home with all elementary students and mailed bulk rate to the parents of all secondary students.
3. Included reports on the progress of the bond issue campaign, along with an explanation of the issues, in the regular weekly employee newsletter. Major news releases were published in the internal newsletter before they were sent to the newspapers.
4. Prepared a special flyer the week prior to the bond election. It was inserted in the newsletter for employees and a copy was given to each of our 27,000 students.
5. Sent numerous news releases to media all over the Valley in addition to our local newspapers. Public service announcements urging people to get out and vote were prepared and sent to over 30 radio stations and four television stations.
6. Arranged television coverage the day of and the day before the election to encourage people to get out and vote.
7. Made sure all news releases sent out two weeks prior to the election included a tag line inviting anyone with questions on the bond issue to call the Community Relations Department. Hundreds of calls were answered.

8. Directed a last-minute telephone campaign to all principals the week before the election. Advised principals of the gravity of the situation if we didn't get our voters out. Asked if they needed any help. Ask them to pass on the message to their parents and make a whole-hearted, last-minute effort in favor of the election.
9. Prepared a full-page ad at the request of the Citizens' Committee. It was a "vote yes" ad which was paid for by the committee and listed the names of the people on the "blue ribbon" committee. This was published in the local paper the night before the election.
10. Arranged with the administration to allow teachers and other staff members to leave their posts during election day to go and vote. Individual schools and departments were instructed to arrange for teachers and other staff members to cover one another's assignments to insure that everyone qualified was able to get to the polls during the day.
11. Sent letters one week prior to the election to all ministers asking them to encourage their parishioners to vote. Announcements were made from the pulpits the Sunday prior to the Tuesday election and many churches included reminders, as well as endorsements of the bond issue, in their weekly bulletins.
12. At the end of election day, visited all of the polls and gathered the initial tabulations. As soon as the results were in, called the various news media with a release on the results, complete with statements from the superintendent and the board president. It was on the wires and the local radio stations and 10 p.m. TV news within minutes.
13. Arranged for the superintendent to send individual thank you letters to the leaders of the advisory committees, to all the principals, to each of the two parent representatives from each school, the school's print shop staff and members of the superintendent's immediate staff who spearheaded the campaign.

The Corner Stone: The Building—Level Effort

Yet, despite surveys and citizens committees and good public relations and all the other things the board of education, the central administration and a broad-based citizens committee can do to help assure the

success of a tax levy or bond issue, the activity most critical to passing the issue at the polls is done at the local school building level.

Building level campaigns at each and every school in the system are absolutely essential to success at the polls.

Says Michigan's Ned Hubbell:

The one trend showing up in every survey we conduct now is that the voters are not looking at the school system in general. Instead, the attitudes and opinions which have a direct bearing upon voter behavior are being formed at the individual building level. When you have teachers and principals who get involved in their constituency, you end up with positive voters. The parent-teacher conference is the greatest form of communication we have, and its impact is reflected on election day.

Also, Hubbell says, many people who vote "no" in a school election do so because of problems they perceive at the local school level. In an interview with the newsletter, *Winning Tax Campaigns*, Hubbell put it this way:

The biggest problem is student discipline. People feel it is either too strict or too lax. And either way, they find it difficult to justify more money for the school when it can't even control its students. A second problem which voters perceive to be true is simply poor classroom teaching. This view of teachers has come about because nobody is telling them that teachers are doing a good job. A third, closely related problem which undermines school tax elections is poor achievement of students. When voters feel their young people are not achieving, they don't feel like plunking more money into what they feel is an inferior school system.

Unless we begin communicating with these people and reassure them that everything is all right—that their money is being spent wisely, we are going to continue to see a lot of school tax issue defeats.

Besides a continuing program of year-round communication with the voters of a school's community, Hubbell says, the other key to election victory is "to work like mad at the building and precinct level when it's campaign time."

The following ideas for organizing building-level (both secondary and elementary) campaigns as well as enlisting the aid of school district

employees are a compilation of strategies and activities from school districts across the country with special thanks to Dallas, Tex., and Utica, Mich. These guidelines provide concrete suggestions for including the entire school family—students, former students, administrators, teachers and support staff in the campaign.

Secondary Schools Campaign

Identify Friends. Principals should go through the alphabetical listings of all families with students in their schools, seeking out "Friends of the School," i.e., parents with positive attitudes who are likely to vote "yes" on election day. To determine these "friends," principals are instructed to use their personal impressions, looking primarily for parents who are members of the PTA or a booster club, or who have students on the school honor roll or are involved in athletics or other special activities at the school. In putting together a "friends" list, the principal confers with teachers, department heads, coaches and counselors. Once the list is formed, it is forwarded to the central campaign committee and the people are contacted, sent brochures and urged to come to the polls to support their schools.

Contact Former Students. "Highly respected" members of each school's last three graduating classes can be contacted, informed of the election proposals, and asked if they will accept the responsibility of contacting other former students and asking them to support the school proposals on election day.

These contacts include letters about the election proposals and personal telephone calls the night before or the day of the election. Former students recruited for this task may include class officers and students who were active in extracurricular activities. Finances for the letters, envelopes and postage are provided by the central election committee.

Develop school finance study units. Another activity is the preparation of a study unit for government classes in all schools on the operation and financing of the school district. The study unit does not deal directly with the election campaign, but it can help build student understanding of the governance of a school system and the methods of financing it.

Explain the issue to the students. The election issue itself is presented to all students in government classes on a given day prior to the election. The presentation is made by the principal and a central office administrator. It is informational and objective, with no effort made to "sell" the students on the election proposal. It is followed by a question-and-answer session to make sure all student concerns are answered.

Help the principal with the facts. Principals also get a news release from the central election committee announcing the ballot proposals and explaining them with a fill-in section for the principal to discuss the benefits of passage and the impact of failure of the ballot questions on his or her individual school. This information goes into a school newsletter, which is mailed to all parents.

Open the school. Open houses are held at each high school immediately prior to the election, and in addition to the normal open house schedule, a presentation on the election proposals is made to the parents attending, with the principal urging a "yes" vote. In addition, an information booth, manned by a school administrator and a local parent, is set up at each open house to pass out information and brochures on the election issues.

Also, posters are provided each school outlining the election's impact on that school. These are hung in the hallways during open house, and student ushers and guides wear buttons that could say: "We Kids Count, Too, Please Care October 7."

Get student ideas and help. Early in the school year, principals meet with all student groups to discuss the election proposals and to offer tasks to be done if students are interested in supporting the election campaign. Suggested activities include:

- Become affiliated with the precinct organization in their elementary school area.
- Type addresses, stuff and collate envelopes.
- Look up telephone numbers of Friends of the School.
- Hand out flyers on the election door-to-door.
- Babysit for children of parents who wish to vote on election day.
- Develop a signed brochure to send to parents of students at the school.
- Assist in preparing posters describing school bond issue improvements.

Mini-Tours. Principals may schedule a mini-tour of all secondary schools by elementary school parents who will have children eventually attending the secondary schools. These mini-tours come immediately after the school's formal open house, and the signs in the hallway

explaining the election issues are still prominently displayed. Invitations for the mini-tours are contained in every elementary school newsletter.

Personal Approaches. Principals are also asked to send personal letters to influential members of their communities, summarizing the election proposals, endorsing them, and urging the community members to vote.

Elementary Schools Campaign

The elementary schools campaigns are, in some respects, like the secondary schools campaigns, in that they involve school newsletters and open houses and such, but they go far beyond, too, since it is here that the nitty-gritty of political precinct work is done.

The major task of the elementary schools is the recruitment of campaign workers. According to many experts, the workers recruited for the finance campaign will probably have the most impact on its chances for success. Their success at meeting voters on a face-to-face basis, distributing information and turning out a large number of voters on election day is critical to the campaign. Thus, workers should be sought who are dedicated, enthusiastic and resourceful.

Recruiting the precinct leader/workers. The recruitment process begins with the selection of a precinct leader from each elementary school area. This precinct leader becomes a member of the central election organization that coordinates all election activities. The duties of the precinct leader are as follows:

1. Assist in selection and training of all precinct workers.
2. Represent the school precinct area on a steering committee.
3. Deliver material and information to precinct workers.
4. Cosupervise all aspects of the campaign at the precinct level with the school principal.
5. Arrange, coordinate and attend all presentations in the precinct.

Obviously, the person selected as the precinct leader should be one who can devote numerous hours to the campaign, is respected by fellow parents, and has exhibited leadership ability in the past.

The remaining precinct workers are selected by the principal and the precinct leader. They are chosen for their commitment to the election

issues and their willingness to work long hours to turn out the positive voters.

One method of selecting campaign workers is the coffee klatch. Principals are given details on what to do:

1. What to serve: coffee and tea plus something sweet, such as donuts, coffee cake, etc.
2. Persons hosting the get-together should fill in the invitations and pass them out to neighbors two days or more before it is held. Telephone or go from door to door as a reminder on the day it is to be held. Hosts are free to invite any friends who might be interested.
3. The meeting should begin promptly. People should be asked to fill out the volunteer form and a form asking to be reminded to vote before they leave.
4. Name tags will help everyone get acquainted as they arrive.
5. The speaker should be allowed to make his presentation as soon as possible because he may have another meeting to attend.
6. After the speaker has finished and questions have been answered, the school principal should thank everyone for coming and adjourn the meeting. Refreshments can be served during and after the meeting.
7. The forms should be turned over to the precinct captain immediately after the meeting.

School Employee Activities—A Key Group

Include everyone. A central office administrator makes a personal presentation on the upcoming election issues to all school employees at their individual schools. Other presentations are made to employees working in administrative offices and such auxiliary buildings as the transportation center and maintenance center.

At the school presentation, *all* employees are invited, including non-certified and substitute personnel.

It is essential that noncertified staff get information on the election proposals, too, so they can discuss them accurately in their neighbor-

hoods. As a matter of fact, it may be more important to make the presentation to them, since a much greater percentage of them live in the school district.

At these meetings, election information materials are given to all staff. And more are available if they want them for their friends, relatives or neighbors.

The following are a variety of ways school employees can help:

- Employees who have built up a close, positive relationship with parents (band directors, coaches, special education instructors, reading consultants, bus drivers, cooks, etc.) should contact these parents prior to the election, inform them of the necessity of the passage of the millage proposals in regard to their programs, and solicit their support in the campaign.
- Employees should make a special effort to become familiar with the election proposals and be able to discuss them in conversations with their spouses, relatives, etc.
- Employees should make a list of friends and relatives with whom they have a very close relationship, etc. and call them the day prior to the election to remind them to vote. They may also contact them a couple of weeks before the election and assure that they will be in town on October 7. Otherwise they can make arrangements for an absentee ballot vote.
- Employees may contact former students with whom they had a very good relationship, and other teachers in the school district to solicit their support for the election proposals.
- Employees can help to staff and man the storefront headquarters in the community. Volunteers should notify their building administrator or UEA building representative.
- All employees who may not be in town on election day should fill out an absentee ballot application as soon as possible and cast their vote by absentee ballot.

Try Using the Mails

One alternative to the door-to-door, face-to-face precinct campaign is the post card or letter writing campaign.

In the Springfield, Mo., schools, persons were recruited from each of the high school areas to hand write post cards to their friends and neighbors urging their vote for a school levy. The cards were gathered at a central location, and all 5,000 of them were mailed at once to reach the voters on the day before the election.

In Clayton, Mo., the Teachers Committee for Passage of the Tax Levy urged fellow teachers to send hand-written post cards to the parents of their children. Following are some suggestions:

Dear (Parent),

It has been six years since the Clayton Schools had a tax increase. The Board, after careful study, is asking for one now. Approval of a 28% increase on April 6 will help us retain the quality which means so much to both of us. I hope you can help.

Sincerely,

Dear (Parent),

We, at school, count on you for help in many ways. Now, we are asking for your support in the April 6 tax levy election. This 28% increase, the first in six years, will keep the quality of our schools intact.

Thank you again for helping.

Sincerely,

Dear (Parent),

It's not PTA refreshments or Valentine parties or survey interviewers or drivers to field trips we need at the moment; it's your vote on April 6.

To maintain the quality of education both of us expect; schools are asking for a 28% increase in the tax levy. May we count on your help?

Thank you!

Dear (Parent),

Ours has been a long and pleasant association. For this reason, I feel I can ask for your help on behalf of the Clayton Schools. The Board is asking for approval of a 28% tax increase on April 6. The need is genuine.

We are asking for your vote and for your influence in the community. Thank you, once again.

Sincerely,

Setting Up a Speakers Bureau

Another important aspect of a school bond issue or tax levy campaign is a speakers bureau; a cadre of school district employees and community leaders who are knowledgeable about the campaign issues, good speakers, and willing to appear before groups to discuss them.

Members may include school administrators, school board members, the campaign steering committee and influential members of the community. They should be provided with information sheets to hand out at

the meetings where they are invited to speak and with large show cards, slides or film of election issue facts and figures to use in their presentations.

It is far better to have a small number of active, eloquent speakers who can present the information in an intelligent, objective manner than it is to have a large, unwieldy and unprepared group of speakers.

Operation of the bureau is a large responsibility. It involves not only providing speakers, but soliciting places for them to appear. Run correctly, it can be a valuable means to a successful campaign. It is usually wise to have a district administrator team up with a board member or citizen for such presentations.

Getting Endorsements

Group endorsements also are valuable in school campaigns. They tell the community that business, civic and social groups support the school issue.

All groups in the community—business, social, civic, fraternal, labor, religious—should be solicited. The speakers bureau can be used as a means of contact. Many times groups can be persuaded to lend support to the campaign after listening to a well-informed speaker.

Endorsements must be publicized. Every endorsing organization should be recognized in the publicity. There also should be periodic round-up stories on endorsements.

In many school districts, as the school systems campaign committee made its citizen contacts, its workers carried an endorsement sheet for people to sign. On the day before the election, the campaign committee paid for a full-page ad in the local newspaper carrying the names of hundreds of people in the community who were supporting the issue.

Endorsements certainly won't win a bond issue or tax levy all by themselves. But they are a valuable part of any campaign's public relations efforts.

Financing the Campaign

It is ironic that one of the most critical problems school finance campaigns usually run into is financing the campaign.

The first rule that should be followed, however, is to NOT use school district money in financing the campaign, if at all possible.

In some states it's illegal, and where it isn't, it is certainly viewed as suspect when any school board tries to use public money to convince the public to come up with some more public money.

The answer, of course, is private funds. From where? Well, how about the following?

- *Real estate board*
- *Chamber of Commerce*
- *Other school-based support groups: i.e., Band Boosters, Dad's Club, 4H or Agricultural Club*
- *Individual board members*
- *Local supportive parents and citizens*
- *Local labor councils*
- *Other local, neighboring employee associations*
- *Local businesses and industry*

Usually, the number one source of campaign funds are, supportive citizens, as well as businesses and industry that have a stake in maintaining the excellence of the school system.

Election Day At Last

Finally, election day, the critical last day of the campaign.

This is where the precinct workers and campaign committee must be out in the street, visiting the polls, providing baby sitters and transportation, making sure, via telephone, that all the potential "yes" voters so painstakingly uncovered during the campaign have gotten to the polls. Remind them all (including your workers) to go to the polls early. Sad tales are told about elections lost by a small number of votes and dedicated workers who forgot to cast a ballot.

If this isn't done, a lot of hard, tedious work can go right down the election drain.

Win or Lose, Be Sure To Say Thanks

But after the election, win or lose, it's time to thank all the dedicated persons, from the precinct workers who pounded the pavement or

manned the phones to the head of the whole campaign.

All should get personal letters from the school district thanking them for giving of themselves to help the young people in the schools.

The Rev. James L. Cummings, president of the St. Louis Board of Education, did it in style, after voters recently approved a 79-cent, \$12 million tax increase for the St. Louis Schools.

Writing in the school district's newsletter, "School and Home," Cummings called the election victory "a day to remember with gratitude," and he wrote to the St. Louis community:

Tuesday, April 27th, will long be remembered by our community as the day St. Louisans started both their city and their public schools on the road to recovery. And it is with heartfelt gratitude that this Board of Education says "Thank you, St. Louis, for approving the school levy."

Our most sincere appreciation goes to the thousands of citizens in all parts of the city who worked long hours in the campaign; to the political, religious, professional, civic, labor and business leaders, neighborhood associations, community organizations, and parents and friends of the schools who supported the schools with actions as well as words; to the news media whose clear and forthright coverage described well the schools' crisis, and last . . . but surely not least . . . to our school personnel without whom there would have been no victory.

This is the time to be grateful but not a time to be complacent. With the challenges that face us, we cannot rest on laurels. A broad-based support has been built. Goals and priorities have been set. Now dedication and commitment are the needs of the day.

With our thanks to the community on behalf of the students, the school personnel and members of the Board goes our pledge to start immediately the process of providing St. Louis with a public school system that reflects and fulfills the community's own goals for its children.

Chapter 8.

How They Did It

The following are thumbnail sketches of successful bond issue and tax levy campaigns from throughout the country, relating to the wide spectrum of problems that beset the election issues and the means used to overcome them.

SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

Total school enrollment: 14,600	Type of campaign: Bond issue
Population of community	Amount of money sought:
or district: 85,000	\$12.1 million
Type of district: Urban	

"We finally passed a bond issue!" The words were those of Alice R. Wolf, coordinator of communications for the Springfield City Schools, as she related the election victory in April 1976, after successive bond issue defeats in 1972, 1973, 1974 and 1975. Following is her story:

Our buildings were old—13 of them over 50 years old. The No. 1 problem, South High, opened in 1911. We had had a building program in the late '40s and in the '50s, when bond issues passed easily—about 2 to 1 vote "for". The last of these, in 1959, was the closest margin, 8600-7200.

Like most school districts in Ohio in the last 15 years or more, ours did not have much money left for buildings after rising costs, higher teacher salaries and inflation. Increased operating levies have to be voted in Ohio, and very few school districts have found it easy to pass such levies. State financing of schools has improved in the last two or three years, but there is still no money for any sort of building program. So, one year or another, we HAD to pass a bond issue.

The campaigns in 1972, '73, and '74 gave us plenty of experience and chances to try various approaches. We followed the advice of board and key citizens in the '73, '74, and '75 campaigns to keep a low-cost look, following an unsuccessful campaign in 1972 which had been and had looked expensive.

The low-cost look didn't work either, so this led to the switch—not a more expensive campaign; we spent more but not that much more—to a campaign that LOOKED expensive. That meant getting the most out of every campaign dollar, using volunteers for everything, making good use of free radio time (talk shows, etc.) and news space in the newspapers.

With the experience we had had in our unsuccessful tries at the polls and the results from other election issues in the city, we were able to study—ward-by-ward and precinct-by-precinct—the turn-out for various elections and the yes/no tendencies.

This led us to the conclusion that the largest and most affluent ward was indispensable to victory; that the smallest (registration-wise) and most "pro" school ward could not help us much and that simply maintaining the support we had there would be sufficient; that we could not hope to get a majority in three other large wards but would aim at a 3% or 4% improvement in the YES vote in those wards as enough to get us a margin for victory.

We were able to be realistic about what we could expect from each ward and thus were able to build our campaign toward getting the YES vote where it would count most.

What Did We Do Differently This Time?

- ✓ We went to a **special** election. In November 1975, when we *almost* passed the same bond issue package, the ballot was cluttered with many other issues. We were #28, and 17% of the voters did not stay with the ballot long enough to cast a vote on our issue.
- ✓ We had much more citizen involvement. A large committee appears hard to handle sometimes in terms of getting together for meetings, putting out mailings, keeping in touch, etc., but it's worth it.

Big Bond Issues Can Still Pass

Despite inflation, rising taxes and declining enrollments, three urban Texas school districts have passed major bond issues in the 1976-77 school year. In fact, the Houston total—\$297 million in bond and tax funds—may be a record, according to school bond experts. Dallas won voter approval for \$80 million for capital improvements and Ft. Worth voters approved \$70 million for capital investments. Although there was opposition to each election, none called for a tax increase.

A big factor apparently was the work of citizen volunteers. "We estimate more than 5,000 volunteers worked on the campaign and we've built bridges of understanding that we haven't had before with browns, blacks and whites working side by side in something they all believed in," according to Houston Supt. Billy Reagan. "It has been a wonderful experience." In Dallas, a citizens information committee used a "one-on-one" approach, meeting with groups and individuals to talk about projects in the bond package. Advertising in the mass media was avoided because the committee wanted to run a more personal campaign. A speakers bureau addressed more than 175 community groups and PTAs. In addition, more than 5,000 yard signs and 50,000 postcards urging citizens to "Vote for the Kids" flooded the district.

Dallas had implemented a new desegregation order only four months earlier. "There is not another major school district in this country that could be issued a massive desegregation order and in the same year approve a major bond issue for construction," commented Supt. Nolan Estes after the successful election. In each of the three districts, school officials paid careful attention to maintaining credibility with the community. Associate Supt. Tommy Taylor said the Ft. Worth bond program included three safeguards to make sure the school district could finance what it promised voters. "In an earlier bond election we lost credibility with voters because there were 8 to 10 items we could not do," Taylor said. Taylor said \$9.5 million of the \$70 million package was set aside to cover inflation and another \$3.3 million was set up as a contingency fund. In addition, programs not affecting individual schools are scheduled to be built at the last of the five-year period and will be the first cut if money runs low.

A guarantee to build specific projects received credit for part of the favorable support of voters in the Houston school district. It was the first time the district had pinpointed projects in a construction bond proposal, according to the district's information officer James Barlow. To be certain the Houston school district can deliver as promised, \$62 million of the total is set aside for inflation.

- ✓ We tried in every way possible for a campaign that looked super-financed, super-organized. The low-key, inexpensive appearance hadn't worked; now we wanted the voters to believe that we really did know what we were doing and that enough key citizens believed in us to provide the campaign money. Some of the ways—
- ✓ A downtown headquarters with professionally painted message of billboard size on the display windows, a telephone, and someone inside at the hours when there was the most traffic downtown;
- ✓ Commercial billboards at all the key spots and a teaser with just the campaign logo for two weeks before the full display went up;
- ✓ Yard signs die-cut for our logo, mushrooming all over town 5 days before the election.
- ✓ Focus in all publicity on the lay citizens in the campaign.
- ✓ We printed endorsement sheets for our person-to-person workers to use. We asked everyone we contacted to sign an endorsement sheet to help them to make a commitment right then. Names from endorsement sheets were used for a newspaper ad on the day before election.
- ✓ We had high school students help to telephone our message to registered voters on the weekend before election. Using the battery of phones at the central offices and the two high schools, we had well-supervised shifts of student callers who did a great job.

What Did We Carry Over From Previous Campaigns?

- ✓ The chairman from last November's campaign stayed with us, announcing that he was determined to see the project passed.
- ✓ We kept the person-to-person emphasis with workers organized by blocks and precincts to call on voters with a fact sheet and their own special message.
- ✓ We conducted a voter registration campaign early.
- ✓ We put our greatest effort on the wards where we knew the voter turn-out would be greatest and most likely to be for us.

- ✓ We used the same newspaper ads featuring photographs of all our school buildings with lists of proposed building improvements. This helped emphasize that the issue had "something for everyone."
- ✓ We used a question/answer format in the newspapers to get specific information to the voters—brief, readable, easy to find, usually in a good spot on page 1.
- ✓ Continuing news releases on the issue, the campaign, and the good things going on in the schools.

What Seemed Especially Effective?

- The Q/A series mentioned above.
- The endorsement sheets.
- Newspaper editorials which came out of a list of suggested approaches provided for the editors.
- The emphasis on the Issue 1 logo—in ads, badges, billboards, fact sheets, etc.

The bond issue, for \$12.1 million, passed by a vote of 5,543 to 4,870.

PLANO, TEX.

Total school enrollment: 17,300	Type of campaign: Bond issue
Population of community	Amount of money sought:
or district: 52,000	\$19.6 million
Type of district: Suburban	

Jerald E. Smith, public information director of the Plano (Tex.) Independent School District, describes how his school district passed a \$19.6 bond issue by a vote of 1,280 to 548:

As in the case of all bond issues, the passage of this largest bond program in Plano history was not something that just happened. Considerable time and effort went into the planning and promotion of the bond program.

Establishing the Need

Need for the bond program was based on official growth projections adopted by the board of trustees and on the knowledge that funds from the last bond issue (April 1970) were exhausted. The growth projections showed that the district's student enrollment had increased in excess of 115% between 1968 and 1972 and indicated that the enrollment would double again by May 1976.

These growth projections were developed by the school administration by analyzing Plano's past growth; by examining the growth rates of the Richardson, Irving and Mesquite public schools during the time those cities were experiencing growth similar to Plano's; and through conferences with developers and the City of Plano engineering department concerning the rapid residential development occurring throughout Plano.

A Tentative Proposal

Supt. H. Wayne Hendrick then drew up a tentative proposal of what would be needed to house the district's enrollment during the next three years. This proposal was presented to the seven-member board of trustees. With dollar figures attached to the projects, Proposition I totaled \$13,816,000 while Proposition II exceeded \$3,000,000.

Selecting a Date

Considerable discussion was given to **selection of a date** for the bond election, with April 1, the date of the school board election favored by a majority of the trustees. However, opposition candidates were fielded against the incumbent trustees. These trustees did not feel they could campaign successfully for both their own reelection and the passage of the bond program. As a result, trustees decided not to seek approval of the bond program until the 1972-73 school year began. They chose not to have the election in May or any of the summer months because it was felt people are less interested in schools when their children are not in class.

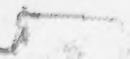
Surveying the Community

After deciding to delay the election, some of the trustees felt it would be wise to **survey** the community to determine if the bond issue would be

favorably accepted. A Dallas firm was hired to survey the attitudes of 400 registered voters in the school district. The survey was conducted in late May and the results were presented to the trustees on June 12. The findings showed that 88% of those surveyed considered the Plano schools good or excellent and that over 70% of those likely to vote approved of the six new schools proposed for the bond program. No dollar figures were attached to the proposals listed in the survey.

Those surveyed had been divided by school attendance zones and the findings indicated one area of extremely high support where we would want to get a heavy voter turnout and one area of some nonsupport where we would want to also concentrate our efforts.

Based on these findings, trustees decided to have **polling places** in each of the six major voting precincts in the district instead of having all voters ballot at one central location as in the past. It was decided to vote in the six elementary schools that were used as polling places in the primary election and to ask PTA officers from those schools to conduct the elections.



Involving the Community

In an effort to help the PTA officers understand the need for the bond program, a bus tour was arranged for the PTA presidents and the trustees to show them how much new home construction was already underway or planned in the district.

At about the same time (June), trustees hired a land planning firm to locate future school sites and to help determine the growth potential in existing school zones.

A series of four newspaper articles were released to the two local newspapers capsuling some of the findings of the voter survey. These stories were handled "straight" since the excellent results of the survey required no "slanting" of the fact that voters were pleased with the programs and facilities of the district and expected this excellence to continue in the future.

A community newsletter mailed in May explained to all taxpayers that all bond funds had been depleted and that new schools were needed because of the rapidly increasing enrollment.

Trustees continued to study the proposed bond program through June and July. On July 24, they met with PTA presidents to begin to finalize plans. That night they took each item and decided whether to lower, raise or leave as was its assigned dollar figure. By that time, the plan had been changed to building four elementary schools with two scheduled for use by August 1973 and two for August 1974.

Presenting One Proposition

They also decided to present the plan as **one proposition** rather than as two propositions for "Immediate" and "Future" needs. The feeling was that there might be a tendency to promote the "Immediate" needs more strongly to the detriment of the "Future" needs, which really were not that far in the future. There was also the feeling that if we offered two propositions, some voters who felt that they had to vote against something would make the "Future" needs their sacrificial lamb.

Spreading the Word

Trustees also asked the administration to line up **meetings with as many civic organizations as possible**. Fourteen such meetings were scheduled and a single speech, explaining the need for each item in the proposed program, was prepared by the administration for the trustees to use. A map was also prepared for the trustees use that showed the locations of the proposed new schools in relation to the residential development in Plano. At each presentation, one trustee made the presentation while another trustee and the superintendent served as consultants to answer questions.

Presentations were made to the Kiwanis, Optimists, Chamber of Commerce directors, City Council, industrial presidents, newspaper publishers and PTA officers prior to actually calling the election. At each presentation, trustees stressed that these plans were subject to change and asked each group to assess whether the plans were on target or needed to be revised.

On August 14 trustees called the bond election for Sept. 9. The total was set at \$19,645,000.

From that time until Sept. 7, meetings were also held with the Home and Apartment Builders Assn., Lions, Civitans, Rotary, Business & Professional Women, Ministerial Alliance, Jaycees and Newcomers Club as well as with the membership of two elementary PTAs. The school staff was briefed on the bond program when they returned to work on Aug. 14 and kept informed via the weekly staff newsletter. It was stressed that staff support was essential to the passage of the bond issue and they were asked to help.

A series of articles was written for the two Plano newspapers, breaking the program down into four segments and using quotes from the school board president to explain the reasoning behind each item.

A flyer on the bond issue was also prepared by the administration and printed and mailed with funds donated by one large home developer and the Home and Apartment Builders Assn. They were taken door-to-door in one area by the PTA membership. The mailing was on a last minute basis because the funds came in late and as a result voters in two areas were not reached.

The Chamber of Commerce endorsed the bond program in a resolution in both newspapers and one newspaper publisher gave the program a semi-endorsement. The other newspaper ran letters from six of the trustees concerning the bond program on its front page. The local education association, an individual builder and the Home and Apartment Builders Association placed ads urging passage of the bond issue. Only one letter (and no ads) appeared in the newspaper in opposition to the bond program, while several letters were written in support of the program.

The Results

The weather was perfect on election day and the polls were open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The trustees and administration were elated that the bond program **passed** in all six boxes (ranging from 4 to 1 to a margin of 8 votes), but were disappointed that only 1,830 votes were cast when more than 11,000 registered voters were eligible. One possible explanation for this low voter turnout is that since no opposition formed many voters may have felt it was not necessary for them to go to the polls.

CLAYTON, MO.

Total school enrollment: 2,000

**Population of community
or district:** 13,000

Type of district: Suburban
(St. Louis)

Type of campaign:

Tax levy for operating expenses

Amount of money sought:

Increase of 28¢, from \$3.47 to
\$3.75/\$100 of assessed valuation

Here is an in-depth look at a successful April, 1976 tax levy campaign in Clayton, Mo., according to the school district's director of communications, Odie Dickens:

Neighborhood Campaign

All elementary schools recruited workers to contact every parent and selected nonparents, distribute campaign information, identify supportive patrons, and make a reminder phone call to them between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. election afternoon.

At the junior and senior high school, parents were recruited to reinforce this neighborhood contact with a telephone call to each parent who had a child in only that particular school. A reminder phone call was also made at this level.

Each worker was supplied with a "Be Proud of the Schools You Created" flyer for distribution to each household; several copies of a brochure giving more detailed information about the need for the tax levy; a profile of district statistics, containing miscellaneous information; several absentee ballot applications; several copies of the "Circuit Breaker" tax relief information for senior citizens; and a blank form to record each contact made.

Workers were asked to report to their neighborhood chairperson by March 31 to give some reading on the general climate of support in the community.

Post-Grad Parents

A group of parents who no longer had children in Clayton public schools agreed to write postcards to other such patrons, reminding them of the

need for passage of the tax levy. About 300 oversized postcards containing a preprinted message were individually addressed, signed, and mailed on April 1. A follow-up phone call was made on Election Day.

Civic Contacts-Endorsements

Letters were sent to 12 groups, soliciting their support and offering information. In addition, area churches, as well as Fontbonne College and Concordia Seminary, were contacted. The audiovisual presentation developed by teachers was shown at the First Congregational Church and was offered to the Clayton Community Center.

Teachers and Support Staff

Working in concert with a representative from each building, the staff committee identified 167 county teachers who live in Clayton and in city of St. Louis teachers whose residence is Clayton. Each one of these teachers received a letter asking for support, with a fact sheet enclosed. The letters were hand-addressed and personally signed. CTA furnished postage for this effort.

Teacher addressed and signed postcards were sent to every parent family in the district. At the elementary level, 4 scripts were provided for teachers to use as guides in writing the postcards. At the junior and senior high school level, because of the larger number of parents to be contacted by each teacher, the text of the postcard was preprinted. They were also personally addressed and signed.

Some classes planned specific activities on April 5 and invited not only parents but senior citizens as well. Retired teachers who live in Clayton were identified. They received a telephone call asking for their support and offering transportation.

A voting reminder was made by elementary children and sent home the day before the election.

Students

All but 10 of 91 students who were potential registered voters were registered at the high school. In addition, all of the previous year's

graduates were contacted either by phone or by letter and absentee balloting encouraged.

There was an open forum for students on Monday, April 5, with a showing of the slide presentation. Information was available for students at this time and they were encouraged to vote April 6. Students acted as poll watchers on election day, wearing signs to identify themselves with the school issue and handing duplicates of sample ballots to interested voters. Students helped arrange the mechanics of this operation and called on other committee members for help where appropriate.

Just in Case

Although no organized opposition was detected, neighborhood workers were urged to supply an administrator's name and phone number to anyone who had questions. Following the mid-week (March 31) definition of voter climate, soft spots were identified and dealt with.

Publicity

Press releases were sent to media—newspapers, TV, radio, etc. (about 25 in all). These were largely ignored because there is no burning issue involved.

A brochure summarizing the rationale was developed. About 5,000 of these were distributed primarily by the Bell-Ringers.

A single sheet summary was written and distributed to patrons and handed out at the polls.

A School District of Clayton profile containing district statistics and comparisons with other districts, at home and abroad, was included in the workers' kits along with a set of general instructions and absentee voting and "Circuit Breaker" information. An issue of the Clayton School News was delivered April 1 and 2 and contained complete information about the election.

Letters to each of the 400+ citizens who wrote or telephoned at the time of a merger proposal were also sent, seeking their support.

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA.

Total school enrollment: 134,960 **Type of campaign:** Bond issue
Population of community **Amount of money sought:**
or district: 557,500 \$15.4 million
Type of District: Metropolitan

Low-key bond issue campaigns work in some communities, as one did in April 1976 for the Fairfax County schools, after three of four previous bond referendums had been defeated, including the last two, in June and November 1975. George F. Hamel, director of school-community relations for the Fairfax County schools, supplies the details:

A low-key campaign was conducted, built around a citizen mailout with a media campaign based on gaining editorial support, with a week-before-referendum climax.

We determined to forget about trying to convert the "no" voter—a hopeless task—and to concentrate on potential "yes" voters—parents and students.

- A successful registration effort was mounted—posters and information on registration were provided to all schools and libraries. Principals urged parents to register, and the Student Advisory Council, working through government classes, conducted a student registration drive. A total of 8,000 new voters were registered.
- A major effort was mounted to get "yes" voters to the polls. Persons favoring the referendum were asked to sign "affirmation of support" forms at meetings. These lists were later used to call citizens to remind them to vote.
- The superintendent *for the first time placed on the local school principals* the responsibility to explain the referendum to their communities. A total of 60 sets of transparencies, with scripts, were prepared for their use—barely enough on some days.
- A brief brochure consisting of questions and answers was prepared early in the campaign and distributed in quantity by speakers through schools, etc. A total of 100,000 were distributed—they were most useful. This was supplemented by detailed fact sheets which citizens were invited to request.

- A lunch and briefing for media representatives early in the campaign helped enlist their strong support.
- The citizens' committee raised funds to pay for advertising in suburban newspapers the week prior to the campaign, and for some radio advertising, particularly on stations aimed at the teenage audience.
- The citizens' committee was headed by a highly respected and widely known county citizen. His name, and those of the citizens he recruited, were most valuable.
- Opponents had in the past made effective use of "no cost" advertising—letters-to-the-editor. This weapon was turned against them early in the campaign by having the citizens' committee chairman, and other committee members, sign strong (and widely used) letters-to-the-editor debunking opposition charges almost as they appeared.
- A brochure was mailed to each county residence (150,000) the week prior to the referendum. Much effort was expended in making this attractive, brief and readable.

While the campaign was helped by many factors—a single-issue election, a simple package easily explained, a tight fiscal situation where capital improvement needs could be related to the operating budget problems—the campaign strategy proved to be sound and highly successful. The previous four referendums had been won or lost by percentages of about 52-48, **the "yes" votes in this election totaled more than 70%.**

BELLINGHAM, WASH.

Total school enrollment: 9,500
Population of community or district: 45,000
Type of district: Urban

Type of campaign: Tax levy and bond issue
Amount of money sought: \$650,000 bond issue; \$4.2 million (about 30% of budget) levy, comparable to previous year.

Like many other school districts, Bellingham uses a citizens committee to study the need for a tax levy, because, says Supt. James G.

Roberts, "to get citizens involved in a campaign, we believe they must be involved in the decision-making process."

Thus, a citizens committee is organized five months before election time to scrutinize the school district's budget needs in weekly meetings, with and without school district staff. Six weeks before election time, the committee reports back to the board of education, recommending the amount of the levy and the date of the election.

In 10 years, the Bellingham School Board has never rejected the recommendations of its citizens committee. Only one time did it even change the amount of the proposed levy, and that was to scale it downward.

Because of Washington law, according to Roberts, the school district, in order to validate the levy vote, must turn out 40% of the number of voters who turned out at the last general election. This meant that in February 1977, the district had to get 10,000 voters to the polls out of a community of 45,000 persons, and then win by a plurality of at least 60%.

Each year, some 30% of local school district budgets in Washington must be financed this way.

Says Roberts: "This means we have to have a noisy campaign. We cannot enjoy the luxury of running the campaign just with parents, hoping for a small turnout of our friends. We must have a full-blown campaign."

At campaign time, the citizens advisory committee becomes the citizens campaign committee, raising funds and directing the campaign.

The first concentration, Roberts says, is on school district employees. Within a week after the levy announcement, some 20 meetings are held throughout the school district with school faculties, bus drivers, custodians, teacher aides, cooks, secretaries and just about every other group of employees. The superintendent and his staff hand out copies of the citizens committee levy recommendations and explain the upcoming election and what it means to the school district.

"We keep our employees fully informed," Robert says. "We feel that if you work here you should know what's going on. We believe that every one of our employees should be a salesman for the school system, particularly at levy time."

The main components of the 1977 campaign were:

- **The ringing of every doorbell** in the community by PTA and staff volunteers, who handed out a simple brochure "which talked mostly about kids" and explained the levy. The brochures were donated by a local business.
- **Sixty small billboards** were placed at strategic places throughout the community—in front of supermarkets was a prime location—urging voters to get out and on election day and support their schools.
- **Boy Scouts went door-to-door**, placing 2,000 doorknob hangers, in the shape of a key, stating "Your Key to Good Schools, Vote Yes. . . . Presented by a Boy Scout."
- **Display advertising campaign** in the local newspaper and posters in shop windows.
- **Every parent in the school system was telephoned twice** by middle school volunteers (elementary schools handled the doorbell ringing this year; the responsibilities revolve from year to year) once urging them to support the levy, and again on election day to make sure they voted.
- **Direct mailing**—a superintendent's letter to all parents explaining the levy, followed by a school newsletter shortly before the election explaining it again.
- **Targeting**—concentrating on areas that had dropped off in their "yes" vote in previous elections. Here a prominent member of that particular area of the community writes a personal letter to every voter asking for his or her support. (Says Roberts: "This really paid off. In one community that had slipped from a 75% plurality to 59%, it turned out an 85% plurality.")
- **Recruiting college students**; all students from Bellingham at Washington U. and Washington State U. received a personal letter from the chairperson of the citizens campaign committee and a postcard application for an absentee ballot. ("This one thing alone may have saved the election," Roberts says. "We got 600 absentee ballots and we needed 307 of them to validate the election. Usually, we receive only one-tenth of this number of absentee ballots.")

- **A senior citizen campaign**, directed by one person, who concentrated on three senior citizen apartment complexes, organizing information sessions, providing speakers, answering questions, distributing literature, etc.
- **Radio spots**, all recorded by high school students like class officers and football stars. Example: "My little brother is in the 7th grade and I don't want him to miss out on all the good things you've provided for me. Please support your schools on election day."
- **Church relations**. Again, one person in charge, going from church to church urging, and getting, support for the school levy through announcements in church bulletins and talks from the pulpit.
- **Other usual campaign strategies**: endorsements, speakers bureau, TV public service spots with prominent citizens and radio talk show appearances.
- **Finally, 18-x-24 inch red and white signs**, "like picket signs," carried by the superintendent and 250 staff volunteers at strategic intersections on election day from 7-8 A.M. and 4:30-5:30 P.M. The signs said simply, "VOTE TODAY." (Says Roberts: "What an impact it made. It was very effective. We received tremendous comment. A large number of people said it was that reminder that caused them to vote.")

The levy carried by a 79.6% plurality.

One final thing, according to Roberts: Each school was supplied a complete list of names and addresses of the citizens campaign committee and many other volunteers who played significant roles in the election victory. The schools were asked to write "thank you" letters.

Some people, Roberts said, received up to 40 "thank you" letters from students and staff throughout the school system.

Wrote one person to the superintendent: "I can't believe it. I've served on all kinds of committees and this is the first time I ever remember getting even one thank you letter."

Adds Roberts: "I think this is a very effective means to develop a long range, solid base of support."

BEAVERTON, ORE.

Total school enrollment: 20,400	Type of campaign: Tax levy
Population of community	Amount of money sought:
or district: 100,000	\$21.9 million ($\frac{2}{3}$ of budget)
Type of district: Suburban	

In Beaverton, Ore., where, much like Bellingham, Wash., a large portion of the local school budget must be approved by the electorate through levy elections each year, election campaigns have followed a similar all-out community effort, and pluralities of more than 80% have been recorded.

But in 1976, an election curve ball hit the school district right between the eyes.

An opposition group called the Beaverton Taxpayers Committee published, in newspaper advertisements, the names, titles and projected salaries of 100 Beaverton school administrators, which would average \$25,000 apiece, if the levy were approved.

Furthermore, the ads charged, administrative costs totaled more than \$2.5 million of the proposed Beaverton budget of \$38.4 million. They asked in big, bold print: "CAN YOU, AS A TAXPAYER, AFFORD TO PAY THESE EXCESSIVE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS?" They urged the electorate to "VOTE NO on the April 20 tax levy referendum."

And 6,154 Beaverton residents, or 51.8% of those voting, did just that.

So it was back to the drawing boards for another vote on Aug. 10.

The school district intensified its election campaign, but so did the opposition, and just before the election the administrative salary ads came back again.

Said the ads: "This same budget was already rejected by the voters. However, the members of the Beaverton School Board evidently do not believe in the judgment and expression of the voters."

The ads hit at medical plan benefits, visual care, medical insurance for retirees, and increased life insurance and disability benefits.

This time, the "yes" vote was down to 42.6%.

Regrouping, the Beaverton School Board took three tacks:

- It cut the budget.
- It defended its administrators.
- It embarked on its own advertising campaign for a third election on Sept. 21.

Cutting the Budget:

It was painfully evident to the Beaverton School Board, after worsening setbacks at the polls, that the community was unhappy with the level of its budget, particularly in the administrative area.

It was a sign that could not be ignored.

So the budget was reduced by 11 administrators, eight support personnel, six teachers, and assorted nonpersonnel cuts (closing a school, transportation, data processing, curriculum development, etc.) for a total of \$1.5 million.

"Consequently," the board said in a four-page newsletter mailed to all Beaverton citizens two weeks before the election, "the operating levy for 1976-77 will be lower than it was last year. The school tax rate will be significantly lower than a year ago. And for most home owners, the total school district tax dollars paid will be about the same as a year ago, even though their property has been increased in assessed value.

"By trimming the budget, particularly in administrative costs," the newsletter added, "the school board believes it has done what the majority of the district residents want."

In the newsletter, the school board also warned that without voter approval on Sept. 21, funds would run out and the schools would have to be closed before another election could be held on Nov. 2.

Defending Administrators:

The headline in the newspaper ad was big and bold: "Administrators Have an Important Role in Your Schools." It was part of the Beaverton School Board's counterattack against the detractors of its administrators.

The ad outlined the many duties and eligibility requirements for administrators and stated:

We believe that our building-level and district-level administrators are among the finest in Oregon. The Board must attract and retain the best administrators available in order to build upon and maintain Beaverton's excellent educational program.

Most of our administrators were teachers here prior to earning and receiving promotions to their present positions. Most live in the district, pay taxes, and participate in community activities. They have taken leadership responsibilities because of their administrative abilities and commitment to students, the educational program, and the community. Compensation paid to these administrators is equal to their educational training, professional experience, leadership abilities, and the amount of time required, and responsibility of the job.

Administrators are paid according to a schedule that is adopted by the Board following consultations with representatives of the administrators group. In setting salary amounts the Board takes into account such factors as responsibility, training, experience, and length of the work year required of administrators.

Pay levels for comparable jobs in other school districts are also considered by the Board. Traditionally, the Beaverton School Board pays teachers, administrators, and other employees at about the same level as other large Oregon districts.

Administrative salaries in Beaverton are about the same as those paid by Portland, Eugene and Salem.

And the ad included the salaries of Beaverton administrators compared with these three neighboring districts.

The Advertising Campaign:

The ad defending administrators was only one of many that brought home the positive aspects of the Beaverton schools and their budget to the community.

One ad outlined, line by line, the \$1.5 million in budget cuts.

Another proclaimed, in big, black headlines, "In Beaverton, Johnnie and Susie CAN Read." It produced standardized reading achievement test results which were both higher than the national average, higher than the state average, and higher than predicted outcomes locally.

Another ad, paid for by the Assn. of Beaverton School Administrators, the Beaverton Education Assn., and the Oregon School Employees Assn. (Beaverton chapter), proclaimed: "BEAVERTON SCHOOLS ARE AT THE CROSSROADS."

It said:

A Message to the Citizens of School District 48 from those of us entrusted with the education of your children:

School District No. 48 has an excellent reputation, not only in Oregon, but across the nation. Many families have chosen to move here for this reason. It's taken years to build this program. Now we find ourselves at the crossroads. Do we maintain our top-notch program or do we start down the path towards mediocrity?

Your school board has been responsive to the concerns of the taxpayers. Large cuts have been made since the last levy election. The cuts that have been made have already had a negative impact on several programs. We can't afford to cut or weaken additional ones.

As school employees who work with your children, we are supportive of the educational work of District No. 48. We are confident that you will join us in keeping District No. 48 on the road to excellence.

The way we vote on September 21 will determine the path we travel. Vote YES on September 21 . . . for the sake of the students!

Still another, paid for by the Citizens for School Support, said: "WON'T YOU JOIN US? WE WILL VOTE YES ON TUESDAY TO SUPPORT BEAVERTON SCHOOLS." It listed the names of more than 200 Beaverton citizens.

The Beaverton Taxpayers Committee came back, for the third time, with its antiadministrator ad, and another telling voters "Do Not Be Intimidated" by the threat to close schools if the election failed.

But this time, the ads were answered, question by question, by the school board's own ads.

The levy carried by a plurality of 59.1%.

Conclusion

100 Questions

So you're going to hold a school finance election. Where do you start?

You start, suggests Michigan's Banach, by asking yourself 100 critical questions. If you can answer all of them, you've got a head start toward an election victory. If you can't answer them, it might be best just to stay off the ballot until they are answered.

They are:

1. When should we hold the election?
2. Why?
3. On which day of the week should the election be held?
4. Why?
5. Are any events likely to occur on this date (or near it) which will affect voters?
6. What will be on the ballot?
7. Why?
8. How complex will the ballot proposition be?
9. How well can we explain our needs in everyday language?
10. How much time will we have to campaign?
11. Is the amount of time for the campaign adequate?
12. Who supported us last time we went to the polls?
13. Why?
14. Where are these people now?
15. How do they feel about the proposition being considered?
16. Why?
17. Do we anticipate any problems which might affect the vote even though they are not related to the proposition itself?
18. How can we eliminate or minimize these problems?
19. How effective has our communication program been during the past year?
20. How can we capitalize on the good things we have been doing?

21. What will our strategy be for this campaign?
22. Who will determine it?
23. Why?
24. When?
25. What has been the election success rate in surrounding districts?
26. Are there regional or state educational issues which might affect the campaign?
27. Who will coordinate our campaign?
28. Why?
29. Who will support the coordinator?
30. Do we need to raise campaign funds?
31. Who will be responsible for fund raising?
32. Why?
33. What resources will this person need?
34. Will we conduct a voter registration campaign?
35. Why?
36. How?
37. When?
38. Where?
39. Who will be the liaison person with our attorney?
40. What will the ballot say?
41. Is the ballot language understandable?
42. Should we use sample ballots in our campaign?
43. How will we get the campaign message to our staff?
44. What will the message be for each employee group?
45. Who will be responsible for turning out the employee vote?
46. What will be the association's/union's role in the campaign?
47. Will students be involved in the campaign?
48. How?
49. Why?
50. Who has the most to gain if this proposition passes?
51. Who has the most to lose if the proposition is defeated?
52. What publics should we direct this campaign toward?
53. Should we have a speaker bureau?
54. Why?
55. Who will coordinate the speaker bureau?
56. Who will prepare the message for the speaker bureau?
57. Will we hold coffee sessions outside the school buildings?
58. Who will speak at coffees?
59. What will be the agenda for a typical coffee?
60. Should we have a series of large informational meetings?
61. Why?
62. What will the agenda look like?

63. What role should each administrator play in the campaign?
64. What will be the board of education's role in the campaign?
65. Have we had organized opposition in the past?
66. Where has the opposition come from?
67. What were these people opposed to?
68. How was opposition handled last time?
69. Should we anticipate organized opposition during this campaign?
70. How will we counter it?
71. Should we?
72. Should we use surveys during the campaign?
73. Why?
74. What should we seek to determine?
75. What will we do with the information?
76. Will we have data processing support during the campaign?
77. How will we use it?
78. How will we control it?
79. How can citizens be effectively involved in the campaign?
80. Who should be on the advisory committee?
81. Why?
82. Who will print our literature?
83. What kinds of literature should we have?
84. How will it be distributed?
85. When will it be distributed?
86. Should we have a central information center?
87. Who should be in charge?
88. Why?
89. Should we have a campaign headquarters?
90. Why?
91. How will we keep those involved in the campaign informed?
92. Should we have a campaign theme?
93. What messages should we provide to clubs and organizations (school boosters, etc.)?
94. Should we make presentations to service clubs?
95. Will we make reminder calls election day?
96. Will we call voters on election day?
97. Who will coordinate completion of these calls?
98. Will our community's telephone system handle this volume?
99. What will happen if the proposition is defeated?
100. Who will we send thank you letters to when the campaign is over?